

# INSPECTION REPORT

**LAWRENCE SHERIFF SCHOOL**

RUGBY

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125753

Headteacher: Dr Peter Kent

Lead inspector: W Keast

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> January 2005

Inspection number: 268847

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:             | Voluntary aided                                |
| Age range of pupils:         | 11-18                                          |
| Gender of pupils:            | Male                                           |
| Number on roll:              | 765                                            |
| School address:              | Clifton Road<br>Rugby<br>Warwickshire          |
| Postcode:                    | CV21 3AG                                       |
| Telephone number:            | 01788 542074                                   |
| Fax number:                  | 01788 567962                                   |
| Appropriate authority:       | The governing body                             |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Mr Jeff Coupe                                  |
| Date of previous inspection: | 22 <sup>nd</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> March 1999 |

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Lawrence Sheriff is a voluntary aided boys' grammar school close to the centre of Rugby. The school is popular and heavily oversubscribed. It is smaller than other secondary schools, having 764 students on the roll. However, 292 of these students are in the sixth form, making it much larger than other sixth forms. Students come from a wide area and a large number of primary schools. Overall, the areas from which they come are above average in socio-economic terms. The proportions of students who have special educational needs, or who are known to be entitled to a free school meal, are well below average. The proportion of students whose home language is other than English is higher than most schools although none is at an early stage of learning English. The attainment of students when they come to the school is well above the national average. At age 16, nearly all students enter the sixth form where they are joined by a similar number of students from other secondary schools. Overall, the attainment of students entering the sixth form is broadly average for an academic sixth form. The school works in collaboration with Rugby High School for Girls to widen curriculum opportunities for students from both schools through mixed classes taught at either school. The school works in several other partnerships including an Independent State School Partnership with Rugby School and a nearby 11 to 16 school. The school has been awarded Investor In People status twice and has recently gained specialist school status as a Mathematics and Computing college. It has twice received school achievement awards.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |                 |                | Subject responsibilities                                                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1522                           | W Keast         | Lead inspector |                                                                                |
| 9569                           | J Leaning       | Lay inspector  |                                                                                |
| 32278                          | D Roberts       | Team inspector | English; sixth form English                                                    |
| 31238                          | G Clubb         | Team inspector | Mathematics; sixth form information and communication technology               |
| 30433                          | C Corps         | Team inspector | Science; sixth form chemistry                                                  |
| 32231                          | A Lyons         | Team inspector | Information and communication technology; sixth form business studies          |
| 32861                          | G Hartle        | Team inspector | Design and technology; sixth form design and technology                        |
| 2496                           | T O'Sullivan    | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages; sixth form French; English as an additional language |
| 22042                          | J Challands     | Team inspector | Geography; sixth form geography; special educational needs                     |
| 14490                          | S Jackson       | Team inspector | History                                                                        |
| 2501                           | R Allison-Smith | Team inspector | Art; sixth form art and design                                                 |
| 7926                           | J Bowden        | Team inspector | Physical education; sixth form sports studies                                  |
| 30814                          | E Coley         | Team inspector | Religious education, music                                                     |
| 32403                          | K Nicholson     | Team inspector | Sixth form media studies                                                       |
| 18072                          | J Stephens      | Team inspector | Sixth form mathematics                                                         |

The inspection contractor was:

**e-Qualitas Limited**

Langshaw  
 Pastens Road  
 Limpsfield Chart  
 Oxted  
 Surrey  
 RH8 0RE

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

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

|                                                                 | Page      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>                            | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>       |           |
| <b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS</b>                           | <b>10</b> |
| Standards achieved in subjects and courses                      |           |
| Students' 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>22</b> |
| <b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>                                 | <b>23</b> |
| <b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b> | <b>25</b> |
| <b>SUBJECTS 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>59</b> |

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Lawrence Sheriff is a very effective school.** Students come to the school with very high attainment and these standards are maintained while at the school. Students achieve very well because of the quality of teaching they receive and as a result of their own attitudes to learning. The school is led and managed very well and has developed a very good atmosphere. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Standards are well above average and students achieve very well
- Examination results have been consistently high
- Very good teaching, curriculum, support and guidance provide a very good quality of education
- A very effective sixth form
- The excellent leadership of the headteacher and excellent governance which are continually moving the school forward
- The excellent links which have been developed with the community and other schools
- Provision for art and physical education in Years 7 to 9, though satisfactory, is not as good as it is for other subjects

**Progress since the last inspection in 1999 has been very good.** The identified key issues of raising results in English and science in Year 9 and increasing curriculum time for music have been achieved. Significant improvements in development planning, target setting and monitoring students' progress have occurred. Results are rising, year on year, and identified strengths have been maintained. The sixth form has been re-housed following a major building programme. The school has twice been awarded Investor in People status and has achieved specialist college status.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| 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 similarly at the end of Year 9.*

**Overall, students achieve very well.** They achieve well in Years 7 to 9. Results in the end of Year 9 national testing in 2004 were very high. In the range of the top five per cent of schools nationally and were better than similar schools. Results in English, mathematics and science were similar in national comparisons but, in comparison with similar schools, mathematics was highest and English lowest. Current standards in Year 9 are above average, and well above average in the three core subjects. They are not high enough in art. Over the last five years, results have been rising in line with the national trend.

The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to C in 2004 was very high, nationally, and above similar schools. The progress that these students made from entering the school to Year 11 was well above national and similar schools' averages. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* or A grades increased noticeably from 2003 to 2004. Current standards are well above average and students are achieving very well. Over the last five years, results have been rising in line with the national trend. A-level results were at least average in all subjects and well above average in many. Current standards in the subjects, which were a focus of the inspection, are well above average overall. They are above average in mathematics, chemistry and business studies and average in the new information and communications technology course. Overall, attainment on entry to the sixth form is broadly average for an academic sixth form and students are achieving very well.

**Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good.** Their very good attitudes, well above average attendance and very good behaviour contribute significantly to their achievement.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is very good.**

**Teaching is very good, overall.** Teachers use their very good knowledge and understanding to plan teaching which prepares students very well for examination success. Students learn very well from clear explanations and good questioning, rising to the challenge of high expectations, working hard and concentrating well. Very good relationships foster an effective learning environment. The curriculum meets students' needs and aspirations very well although there is a weakness in the balance within physical education in Years 7 to 9. The extra-curricular learning opportunities are very good and enhance the curriculum greatly. Students are very well cared for, supported and guided throughout the school. Very good links with parents and excellent links with the community and other schools support students' achievement very well.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good.** The excellent leadership of the headteacher has enabled a very effective staff team to be built. Senior staff, including those with responsibility for subjects, lead very well. Management is very good. Governance is excellent. Governors are highly committed to the school and have played key roles in shaping both its vision and its physical development. They have ensured opportunity for daily collective worship although these opportunities are not always taken.

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

Parents are very positive and express favourable views of the education the school offers. They say that teaching is very good, that students are expected to work hard and that they make very good progress. If there are any concerns they are confident that they can approach the school and that they will be listened to and their concerns addressed. The inspection team agrees with these very positive views.

Students say that this is a very good school which they are very proud to attend. Discussion confirms that they are expected to work hard and always do their best. They do not believe that there are problems with bullying but say that behaviour can vary. Despite a few concerns about fairness they praise their teachers, say their views are respected and that they are treated very well. The inspection finds these views can be substantiated.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

Through its accurate self-evaluation and continual striving for improvement, the school is well aware of comparative weaker aspects of its work and has plans to tackle these. These plans are being implemented. Additional to these plans the school should, in Years 7 to 9, seek to raise achievement further in art and redress the balance between the chosen activities in physical education.

and, to meet statutory requirements

- A daily act of collective worship

## THE SIXTH FORM AT LAWRENCE SHERIFF SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a very good and cost effective sixth form.** It has expanded and improved considerably since the last inspection. Examination results are well above average. Teaching is very good overall, resulting in very good achievement. A wide curriculum choice, in collaboration with Rugby High School, provides very well for the needs and aspirations of the students within the context of an academic sixth form. Students are prepared to work hard and take responsibility for their own learning. The sixth form is very effectively led and managed.

The main strengths are

- The very positive attitudes of students contribute well to their overall achievement and the ethos of the school
- Students are extremely well supported and guided in their academic progress and personal development
- The curriculum provides very good opportunities for enrichment
- The prefect system provides very well for students' personal development and is an important contribution to the life of the school

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

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

| Curriculum area                           | Evaluation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| English, languages and communication      | <b>Very good</b> in <b>English literature</b> where the demanding nature of the written and oral tasks leads to very good achievement. <b>Very good</b> in <b>French</b> where students' language skills are developed strongly.                                                                                     |
| Mathematics                               | <b>Good</b> in <b>mathematics</b> . Students' attitudes and teachers' expertise and understanding examination contribute to achievement.                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Science                                   | <b>Satisfactory</b> in <b>chemistry</b> . Students are achieving their predicted standards.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Information and communication technology  | <b>Good</b> in <b>ICT (AVCE)</b> . Students are achieving well from a comparatively lower starting point than many other subjects.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Humanities                                | <b>Very good</b> in <b>geography</b> . Well structured lessons and students' responsiveness leads to very good achievement.                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Engineering, technology and manufacturing | <b>Very good</b> in <b>design and technology</b> . Students' personal research for project work and the quality of teaching contribute to very good achievement.                                                                                                                                                     |
| Visual and performing arts and media      | <b>Good</b> in <b>art and design</b> . Students achieve particularly well when combining outcomes of their research and reading with first hand experience. <b>Very good</b> in <b>media studies</b> where effective teaching methods result in very good achievement from little previous knowledge in the subject. |
| Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel   | <b>Very good</b> in <b>physical education</b> Enthusiastic teaching and very positive student responses leads to very good achievement in this increasingly popular course.                                                                                                                                          |
| Business                                  | <b>Good</b> in <b>business studies</b> . Students achieve well in relation to their starting points and especially well when theory is applied to real life contexts.                                                                                                                                                |
| General education                         | There were no focus subjects in this area.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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



## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Students receive excellent support and guidance from a team of tutors. Excellent procedures introduce students, including those joining from other institutions, to the requirements and expectations of the sixth form. Teachers have very detailed knowledge of the students and this enables them to give very effective guidance. A priority is given to ensuring very good attendance. Students' progress is regularly monitored, ensuring they know how well they are doing and leading to very good guidance on how to improve. Students are very effectively supported with their higher education applications.

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

**The sixth form is very well led and managed.** The headteacher and the governing body have played an important role in leading the expansion of the sixth form. Strong links have been formed and maintained with Rugby High School which support extended choice in the curriculum and help students' personal development. Very good leadership has developed a strong team of tutors. Provision for the increased numbers has been very well managed. The school leadership and the governors have a clear understanding and vision of the place of the sixth form in the overall post-16 provision in the area.

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

Students are extremely positive about the school and the support they receive. They are very appreciative of the quality of teaching and the excellent opportunities for involvement in the life of the school such as through the prefect system.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Results in national examinations at the end of Year 9 and Year 11, in 2004, were in the range of the top five per cent of schools, as they have been for several years. Students' standards of work in Year 9 are above and in Year 11 are well-above average. Students are achieving well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11. Students with special educational needs make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress throughout the rest of the school.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 and overall at the end of Year 11 compare favourably with similar schools
- The high standards of attainment on entry are maintained throughout the school
- Students achieve as well as they do because of the teaching they experience and their own commitment to work and learning
- In Year 9, standards in physical education are too varied between the activities in the subject and are not high enough in art

#### Commentary

1. The attainment of students on entry to the school, based upon the Year 6 national results, was very high in 2004. It was within the range of the top five per cent of schools nationally. The results of the national tests at the end of Year 9, in 2004, were also very high nationally. They were above the median<sup>1</sup> for similar schools<sup>2</sup>. Results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were each very high in national comparison. In comparison with the median for similar schools, results in mathematics were well above, in science they were broadly in line and they were below in English. The school's results at this age have been rising in line with the national trend. Results in English have been rising more rapidly than nationally up to 2003. In 2004 they dropped, for no discernible reason, at the same time as there were national issues over the marking of these tests.

#### *Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004*

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English       | 39.9 (43.4)    | n/a (33.4)       |
| Mathematics   | 47.6 (48.3)    | n/a (35.4)       |
| Science       | 41.8 (43.0)    | n/a (33.6)       |

*There were 89 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. Standards in Year 9 are above average overall and well above average in the core subjects. They are also well above average in geography, history and music. Standards in art and physical education are average, overall, although better than this in some aspects of the subjects, for example games. Students' attainment on entry to the school in subjects other than the core subjects is varied and dependent on their experience in their primary school. In relation to these entry standards, students in Year 9 are achieving well. They are achieving very well in the core subjects, history, geography and music. Achievement in physical education is satisfactory overall but is very good in the games aspect which is given the greater proportion of teaching time. Students do not reach high enough standards in art partly because the time given to the subject is limited and is taught in a number of blocks in a carousel system. Planning is not sharp enough to make best use of this fragmented learning experience.
3. GCSE results in 2004 were very high compared to schools nationally indicated by the proportion of students gaining five or more grades A\* to C, the average total point score or the average capped point score<sup>3</sup>. In comparison with the median for similar schools<sup>4</sup>, the proportion of students gaining

<sup>1</sup> The median of a sequence of numbers is the middle one

<sup>2</sup> Schools whose students had an average point score, at the end of Year 6 in 2001, of greater than 30

<sup>3</sup> The average of students' best eight scores

five or more grades A\* to C and the average total point score were above, while the average capped score was broadly similar. Analysis of individual students' results compared to their earlier attainment shows that their progress, the value added by the school, from the beginning of Year 7 to Year 11 was well above the median both nationally and for similar schools. The rising trend in the school's results is broadly similar to the national trend. As might be expected, the results in most subjects were significantly above national results. In the three sciences, usually taken by the more able students nationally, results were in line with those gained nationally. Students performed particularly well in mathematics, French and general studies. In seeking to identify a more discriminating indicator of success than the national five or more grades A\* to C measure, the school has begun to use the proportion of students who gain five or more grades A\*/A. This indicator rose from nearly one-third in 2003 to nearly one half in 2004.

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

|                                                     | School results | National results |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades  | 98 (98)        | 52 (52)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades  | 100 (100)      | 89 (88)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades  | 100 (99)       | 96 (96)          |
| Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects) | 52.4 (49.7)    | 34.9 (34.7)      |

*There were 88 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. Standards in Year 11 are well-above average overall. They are particularly high in mathematics and are above average in ICT, in the physical education that all students experience and religious education. Overall, students are achieving very well. They are achieving well in art, ICT, physical education and religious education. Students achieve as well as they do because they are taught well and because they are willing to commit time and effort to their learning. In one or two subjects these attitudes to learning play a particularly significant role in students' learning and achievement.
5. The number of students with special education is very small. They are well known by their teachers, supported well in lessons and are achieving as well as their peers. Gifted and talented students make good progress. The highest-attaining students in Years 7 to 9 are not always challenged as well as they could be by the planned teaching. This challenge is more consistent in Years 10 and 11 where planning of teaching closely follows examination syllabus requirements and all students are encouraged to work at as high a level as they can.

**Sixth form**

Results in the sixth form, in 2004, were well-above average, as they have been in recent years. Overall, standards in the subjects which were a focus in the inspection are well above average and students are achieving very well.

**Main strengths**

- Overall results are improving year on year
- Students achieve so well as a result of the teaching they receive and the commitment they make to work and learning
- There is a consistency in achievement across the focus subjects

**Commentary**

6. A new scoring system has been introduced to cover all qualifications that students of this age may gain with the result that the average point score appears higher than before. The school's results were well above the national median for all sixth forms, as they have been for at least the last three years. This broad benchmark masks the increase, from 2003 to 2004, in the average point score gained by the students and where the proportion of students gaining grades A and B rose significantly. Results in individual subjects, in which five or more students were examined, were above or well above the median in all subjects except chemistry and business studies where they were broadly average.

---

<sup>4</sup> Schools whose students had an average point score, at the end of Year 9 in 2002, of at least 39

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

|                                          | School results | National results |
|------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades | 97.5 (97.3)    | 92.4 (92.3)      |
| Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades | 48.7 (38.9)    | 36.2 (35.6)      |
| Average point score per pupil            | 348.3 (315.6)  | 265.2 (258.2)    |

*There were 147 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

7. Standards in the subjects which were a focus of the inspection are generally well above average and students are achieving very well. Standards in mathematics, chemistry and business studies are above average and in the new and yet to be examined AVCE ICT course they are average. In these courses students are achieving well.

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

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are very good. They are supported by the very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural, including multicultural, development and by the very strong ethos. Attendance and punctuality are very good overall.

#### **Main strengths**

- Many very good opportunities enable students to take on responsibility, not least the successful student council which allows the views of students to be heard
- The emphasis on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps students develop into mature young adults
- Relationships throughout the school are very good and contribute to the ethos
- Almost all students are very keen to learn, behave very well and are expected to work very hard

#### **Commentary**

8. The school is very successful at raising students' self-esteem. The whole ethos is based on helping every one to achieve their best and the 'I can' philosophy ensures that students respond to this challenge very well indeed. Students' personal development is fostered very well and participation in sport, music and the arts is high. Each year group has elected representatives to the student council, which is formally run and recognised as being very effective. A highly effective meeting offered students the chance to discuss agenda items raised by the delegates. As a result of their discussion on healthy eating, the school is examining the possibility of a 'traffic light' system to raise awareness of healthy foods. Students regularly present a report to the governing body and are involved in the appointing of staff. The school grounds have been improved and after discussion a tree is to be planted to replace one which was removed.
9. Across the curriculum and through personal, social and religious education (PSRE), students have very good opportunities to develop spirituality. In a powerful assembly on the Holocaust they were totally absorbed. Moral and social issues are explored very successfully through the 'thought for the day' and students' respect and concern for each other underpin this. Cultural and multicultural activities are enhanced through music, the learning of languages, in history and through links with other countries. In religious education, students are becoming more aware of the main world faiths and the plight of asylum seekers and refugees in Britain's multicultural society. Participation in the very wide range of extra-curricular activities makes a major contribution to students' personal development. Outside speakers, for example the regular visits from representatives from *Youth for Christ*, support the learning and development very well. Students are involved in fund raising for those less fortunate. The huge number of items donated meant that a successful auction, which raised in excess of £550 for the Tsunami appeal, had to be extended to other lunch times. Parents are very pleased with the opportunities provided by the school for students' personal development and believe the school plays an important role in helping them to mature.

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

| Authorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| School data        | 4.9 |
| National data      | 6.9 |

| Unauthorised absence |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| School data          | 0.2 |
| National data        | 1.1 |

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

10. Students' interest and enthusiasm for school lead to very good levels of learning. They understand the expectations and behave very well both around the school and in lessons. Students attend school regularly and there are few problems. The attendance rate is well above the national median. The exclusion rate is below average and is declining. Students express pride in their school. Analysis of the student questionnaires indicated a very positive picture across most aspects of the school apart from the students' concerns about some aspects of behaviour.

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

| Categories used in the Annual School Census         | No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| White – British                                     | 617                  | 11                                | 0                              |
| White – Irish                                       | 3                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| White – any other White background                  | 6                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean                   | 2                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Asian                             | 4                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – any other mixed background                  | 3                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian                     | 35                   | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani                  | 1                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 1                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean                  | 1                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – African                    | 1                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Chinese                                             | 6                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| No ethnic group recorded                            | 85                   | 0                                 | 0                              |

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

11. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. The majority take pride in their work and its presentation. The effort they put into their work, particularly the course and project work in Years 10 and 11, is an important factor in their learning and subsequent achievement. It is the reason why some instances of good teaching lead to very good learning.
12. During the inspection, the behaviour of a few students did not match the school's expectations but these students were very much the minority and such instances were generally managed well. Bullying occurs but is not allowed to become an issue and is dealt with promptly and effectively. Racism rarely occurs and is simply not tolerated. Students' social interaction takes place in a calm and relaxed atmosphere where there is a clear respect for the school environment.
13. Students particularly value good and helpful teachers, very good relationships with staff and friends, fun and interesting lessons and very good extracurricular activities. A few thought there was unfairness but in discussion this seemed to relate to isolated instances.

**Sixth form**

Students' attitudes to school and to their learning are exceptional and behaviour is very good. Attendance and punctuality are very carefully monitored and are very good. Personal development continues to be strongly supported.

### **Main strengths**

- Relationships in the sixth form are very strong
- Students are very positive about the opportunities they have to learn and develop
- Almost all students are very keen to learn and expect to work very hard

### **Commentary**

14. Outstanding relationships and attitudes, and very good behaviour, and attendance levels underpin the high standards. Opportunities for leadership and for students to support younger students are legion. The school sets particular store by providing opportunities for boys to take responsibility and use their initiative. Sixty prefects are selected in the sixth form (they volunteer and are democratically elected) and other prefects in Years 10 and 11. Older prefects mentor the younger ones. The student council reports annually to the governing body and sends representatives to the student curriculum committee to present their ideas for curriculum development. A student selection committee from across the school has been involved in selecting all the teachers who have joined the school in recent years, including the present headteacher. Students from all years are encouraged to make online contributions to *Transforming Learning* in order to exchange ideas with their teachers on the benefits of different teaching styles. Students also run clubs, for example Year 13 students run a highly effective and very well attended science club for students in Year 7. Sixth form students benefit from the same opportunities for personal development as younger students. Older students benefiting particularly from the inter-school collaboration and challenges. The joint courses which operate with Rugby High School, for example in media studies, provide an additional dimension to students' social development.
15. Their sixth form experience is clearly beneficial and they are strongly encouraged to become self-motivated learners. The courses and teaching provide many opportunities for students to carry out research activities and develop portfolios of work. Students relish these opportunities and commit much time and energy to gain as much as they can from them. Students are courteous and friendly and respond very well to the school's very high expectations. They are confident that they are very well prepared for examinations and for future study. They are very appreciative of their sixth form leaders and the very high quality teaching which helps them to achieve their very best.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education provided by the school is very good in both the main school and the sixth form. Teaching, and the opportunities for learning within the curriculum, are very good. The school takes very good care of students, who are very well supported in their learning and development. Students benefit from excellent links with parents, the community and other schools.

### **Teaching and learning**

In the main school, students are very well taught and they learn very well. Overall, assessment is very good and students' work is accurately marked.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this is used to provide students with well-planned, purposeful lessons
- Students' very good attitudes contribute to very effective learning
- There is a consistency in subject teaching, which is generally good or very good
- Very good relationships enable teachers to give students the support and guidance when they need it
- Most students know what they need to do to improve their work but this is not understood in all subjects by younger students

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 112 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good     | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor   | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 6 (5%)    | 44 (39%)  | 46 (41%) | 14 (13%)     | 2 (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.

16. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. In particular there has been an increase in the proportion of teaching which was at least good, and the proportion which was very good or excellent. This is a result of the emphasis placed by the school on this aspect of its work and developed through student surveys and close partnership working between pairs of departments in the *inner school variation project*. In nearly all subjects, teaching was judged to be good or very good. In mathematics, English, French, history and music, teaching, learning and students' subsequent achievement was very good throughout the main school.
17. Teachers use their very good knowledge, of both the subject and of examination requirements, to plan interesting and challenging lessons. They give clear explanations of new ideas and concepts and can respond readily to any questions which may be asked of them. In turn, teachers hold good question and answer sessions with students, where the probing questions they ask both challenge students and allow them to identify students' understanding or possible misconceptions. When appropriate, lessons are well focused towards helping students maximise the marks they can gain in examination. Examination technique is well taught.
18. The planned teaching builds well on students' previous learning in the majority of lessons. Teachers are aware of the stage that individual students have reached and provide tasks and work which provides challenge to move them forward. At the start of lessons teachers share with students what they should learn and this is reviewed at the end. This helps students know what is expected and enables them to recognise and confirm what has been gained during the lesson. In Years 7 to 9, art is taught in blocks of time in a carousel arrangement with design and technology. The resulting breaks in students' experience make it more difficult to provide continuity and planning is not sufficiently rigorous. Expectations of what students could achieve are not always well matched to earlier learning and, as a result, their attainment is not high enough. Elements of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy for improving the quality of teaching have been incorporated in lessons resulting in starter activities which capture students' interest and get them quickly into the lesson. Some plenary sessions at the end are not as well used, concentrating more on the tasks which have been accomplished rather than the learning which has taken place.
19. Very good relationships in lessons provide the environment in which students can ask questions and try things out without fear of ridicule if mistakes are made. Their independence as learners is well supported by this environment. Students particularly enjoy the opportunity to share ideas and to debate. In these situations they work well together. Students bring very good attitudes to their learning. They are willing to work hard and particularly to put a lot of time and effort into project work outside the classroom. The quality of their research and portfolios of project work clearly show the contribution that these make to their learning and achievement. A very small number of students need firmer management than most and most teachers achieve this without a problem. However, not all teachers have the same range of management strategies and too wide a variation between teachers leads to some comparatively weaker teaching.
20. Teachers use the resources available to them very effectively in their lessons. The use of ICT is widespread across the curriculum with good use of interactive whiteboards, language laboratories, Powerpoint presentations and computers being observed. Its use is also clearly included in subject planning. Teaching assistants are particularly effectively used in supporting use of this resource.
21. In almost all subjects, assessment arrangements are very good and students are well aware of how they are doing. A very well-structured system ensure that students' progress in each subject is assessed every term and individual targets are set. Students and parents are made aware of these grades and teachers use them to plan lessons which allow the students to achieve the target grade. Assessment is stronger in Years 10 and 11 where teachers are very familiar with examination requirements and grade expectations. In Years 7 to 9 the full range of the requirements of the

National Curriculum in some subjects has not always been fully recognised so that overall assessments are limited. Students generally understand their levels of attainment and have good guidance about how to improve. In many lessons, good one-to-one mentoring using immediate assessment of students' work gave them good guidance and support on how to improve. Students' work is generally regularly and well marked. This has not been the case in the examination course in physical education where it has resulted in fewer of the highest grades being gained. This situation is being remedied.

### Sixth form

Overall, teaching is very good and this leads to very good learning in most subjects. Assessment is very effective. Students' work is well marked and they understand very clearly how to improve.

### Main strengths

- There is a high proportion of excellent or very good teaching
- A wide range of teaching strategies is used to prepare students well for examination success
- Students are generally well informed about their progress and how they can improve their standards

### Commentary

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 45 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good     | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor   | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 2 (4%)    | 20 (45%)  | 19 (42%) | 4 (9%)       | 0 (0%)         | 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.*

22. Teaching in the sixth form reflects all the strengths seen in Years 7 to 11. Lessons are very well planned and generally provide a greater consistency in the challenge they present to students. Teachers' subject expertise and enthusiasm show through in many lessons and these effectively engage students in the work and promote a desire for learning. A wide range of teaching strategies took good account of the different ways in which students learn. Students' attitudes to learning and their willingness to spend time and effort working on their own continue to be important factors in the very good learning which takes place and leads to students achieving very well. Teaching in Year 12 is effective in responding to the wide range of experience which students bring from their previous schools. In some subjects, they may have had no previous experience. Nevertheless, teaching leads to them achieving well, or very well, in all the focus subjects.
23. Whole-school assessment procedures remain very strong in the sixth form. Target setting, and the monitoring of progress towards these, is rigorous. Students are very clear about the level at which they are working and guidance about how to improve and what needs to be done is fully given. Marking of students' work and relating this to potential examination grades is very good because it relates very closely to examination board criteria and teachers have a wealth of experience on which they can draw. During lessons, teachers recognise how well students are understanding new work and are ready to give support, advice and encouragement as and when it is needed. This very good practice supports students' learning and achievement well.

### The curriculum

Opportunities for learning are very good and meet the needs and aspirations of the students very well. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and developments planned. The school is innovative in its approach and participates in a number of positive partnerships. Resources, including the teaching force, to support the curriculum are very good.



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good approach to personalised learning and to the development of skills and responsibility for academic self-fulfilment
- The very good provision of extra-curricular activities, including opportunities for participation in the arts and sport
- The range of curriculum extension and enrichment activities after school provide opportunities for many students to develop their gifts and talents to very high standards
- There are weaknesses in the curriculum organisation in art and PE in Years 7 to 9

## Commentary

24. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements for Years 7 to 9. All students study two modern foreign languages. The time allocated to each subject is generally appropriate and the time for music, a previous key issue, has been increased. Time for art is currently limited and the subject is taught in a rotation with design and technology. Planning across the three year course is not structured enough to ensure that the available time is used as effectively as possible. Although physical education has sufficient time overall, the balance is too heavily biased towards games and athletics so that time for gymnastics and outdoor adventure activities is restricted. The school seeks to provide a curriculum which responds to individual needs and refers to this as *personalisation*. The curriculum from Years 7 to 9 is enhanced well by several such opportunities, provided out-of-hours, into which students may opt. These include, for students in Year 9, one year courses leading to GCSE Russian and Latin, the latter through a video conferencing link, and a mixed aged group following AS-level music technology.
25. Students in Years 10 and 11 follow a curriculum which, through its compulsory core, ensures a balanced education for all students. Within this, students have a choice between four disciplines of design and technology and a selected group study the individual sciences within the allocated time. Personalisation in these years is achieved through the music technology course, GCSE music and an upgrading of the GCSE short course in religious education to a full course through out-of-hours lessons, an option choice of AS-level politics and a lunch time course in AS-level general studies course for Year 11 students. Plans include introducing AS-level law, through video conferencing, and a course in *science for public understanding*.
26. There is a strong input to the wider curriculum from external agencies and partners. These include the effective Independent State School Partnership with Rugby School and Bishop Wulstan Catholic School. A strong and positive tradition of close curricular links with Brooke Special School supports students' achievement in both schools. Students benefit from a close partnership with *Connexions*, with an advisor based on site. Work experience is very well organised to help boys to make appropriate career decisions. All students in Year 11 spend two weeks on work placements and have travelled as far afield as Sweden and Germany. On their return they have the opportunity to review their experiences within the curriculum and in the assembly programme. Year 10 students benefit greatly from their participation in business enterprise days.
27. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. Students follow a mixed programme, with religious education and citizenship as part of the overall provision. A wide range of topics is covered with good input from outside organisations. For example, during the inspection a retired police officer was illustrating the importance of keeping cars and pedestrians separate. External speakers, including members of *Youth for Christ* and local parliamentary candidates, are regularly invited to the school. The programme becomes more challenging as students move up the school. It meets statutory requirements in its coverage. A few lessons were sampled. The quality of teaching seen was good with some very good features.
28. A large number of students take part in a wide variety of extension and enrichment activities both within school and through external organisations. These support their personal development, their learning and to enable them to develop their individual interests. Opportunities to work within the local and wider community are particularly good; these are dealt with more fully in the section on partnership with parents, other schools and the community. Several subjects enrich their provision by providing lunchtime clubs. The school was one of twelve which took part in the national Technology Enhancement Millennium Project. Overseas trips include visits to Germany in Years 8 and 11 and Years 10 to 12 can take part in the four week World Challenge in the summer holidays.

In 2006 they will be going to Tanzania. The arts feature strongly. Students are regularly involved in local art exhibitions and a recent drive to increase musical activities has boosted the uptake of instrumental lessons. The school orchestra, jazz band, blues band, intermediate band and guitar ensemble all perform regularly. These performances have included pieces composed by students. Recent drama productions have included the *Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicoloured Dreamcoat*. Year 9 students joined students from Rugby High School in a project with the Royal Shakespeare Company. The school produces some talented debaters and the school team reached the regional finals of the recent Mace Debating Competition.

29. The provision for participation in sports throughout the year, including Saturdays, is very good. Representing one of four houses, boys compete annually in ten different sports at six different levels for the Parents' Trophy. There are excellent opportunities to represent the school in competitive fixtures including A and B team sports. Sports tours are arranged regularly both with the UK and overseas. Rugby teams have visited Ireland, South America and Canada, cricket teams have gone to Holland and Barbados and hockey teams to Spain. Students represent the county at cricket, athletics, hockey and rugby.
30. The staffing of the school curriculum is very good. In almost all subject areas the staff are very well qualified, have very good subject knowledge and are experienced in examination requirements. There are no unfilled posts in the school. A very effective team of technical, administrative and other staff support the teachers. The technical support seen in science, design technology and ICT had a direct impact on the teaching, enabling teachers to support a range of learning styles. Physical education is well supported by a wide range of very effective visiting coaches throughout the year. Accommodation supports teaching the curriculum well. Provision is very good in music, physical education and English. However, one of the design technology rooms is showing its age and in need of renovation. The new sixth form block is a great strength. Teachers have good learning resources available overall although the range of materials available to students in art is unsatisfactory. The library is a well used by many subjects especially in modern foreign languages. The school is well supplied with computers and these are used across the curriculum to support learning for students to use in researching and presenting their work. However, departments such as English, science, history and geography, have difficulty in gaining access to computers for whole class use every time they need it.

### **Sixth form**

The curriculum in the sixth form is very good. It suits the needs, interests and attainment of the school's sixth formers. Students have access to a wide range of courses.

### **Main strengths**

- The collaboration with Rugby High School increases the range of courses available
- The very good level of participation in sports
- Students are encouraged to become responsible and independent in their approach in preparation for university

### **Commentary**

31. The range of advanced level courses, approximately 27, is well matched to the aspirations and needs of current students. Provision is enriched by the partnership with Rugby High School, where four of the subjects are taught. In general, students study four in Year 12 and carry three on in Year 13. The collaboration with Rugby High School allows many potential clashes between subject choices to be avoided when a course may be studied at the other school. However, some timetabling clashes remain. For example, physical education significantly reduces the number of students attending a Year 13 lesson in history and a similar clash with design and technology affects student attendance at a Year 13 geography lesson.
32. Students' learning experiences are broadened by a requirement to follow either a critical thinking course or general studies in Year 12, with the option to turn this into a full A-level in Year 13. All students, as in the main school, have a weekly PSRE lesson. Very good opportunities to pursue sporting activities include two timetabled lessons each week. Resulting from the very good range of enrichment activities, 17 students have received county representative honours, 2 regional and 1 national during the last year.

33. The school has set up work experience placements for A-level linguists in Germany and France. In addition, all students in Year 12 undertake work experience during the final week of the summer term. Young Enterprise involves up to thirty Year 12 students, placing them in regular contact with the local business community.
34. Sixth form students engage in a broad range of school and inter-school events. They run clubs and supervise homework sessions. They have also worked with local primary schools, running a series of animation sessions. Students engage in charity fund-raising and visits to local hospitals and senior citizens' homes.
35. The staffing for the sixth form curriculum is very good. Teachers are very well qualified and have very good or excellent subject knowledge. The technical support in information and communication technology, chemistry and design and technology is very good, enabling students to undertake a range of detailed investigations in these subjects. The accommodation for post 16 lessons is very good, notably in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, physical education and theatre and media studies. There are good resources available to teachers and students in most subjects. The resources in modern foreign languages are particularly good with a wide range of computers, audio-visual resources and a dedicated language laboratory.

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

The school makes very good arrangements for the care, health and safety of all its students whose welfare are at the heart of the school's ethos. Advice and guidance for students is very good and is based on the careful monitoring of their academic and personal development. The school offers students very good opportunities to express their views and contribute to the running of the school.

### **Main strengths**

- The pastoral system is a key strength of the school. Students are well looked after and can achieve their best in a safe and highly supportive environment
- The management of health and safety and of child protection issues throughout the school is very good
- School data systems are very well used to supply information that is helpful to teachers, students and parents in a readily accessible format
- Transfer from one stage of a students' education to the next is very effectively managed

### **Commentary**

36. The arrangements for child protection are very good, staff are aware of the procedures and all requirements are met. The security arrangements including those for Internet use are very good. All the routine checking systems and risk assessments for health and safety are carried out thoroughly and at the right frequency. Record keeping is meticulous. Access to support from the pastoral care manager and a range of external agencies enables wider educational issues to be addressed and this has major benefits for learning.
37. Students are supervised very well throughout the day and this makes a significant contribution to their safety, as well as encouraging strong relationships between them and their teachers. In discussion and on questionnaires, most students say that they know the staff well, are confident in approaching them, and know that they will be listened to. They praise the unstinting help and support they receive from teachers who know them very well and who offer very good support and guidance in relation to their personal development. Teachers are generally alert to students' learning needs and support them very effectively. The standards of care make a very good contribution to the school's very positive ethos.
38. The school has very effective systems for providing students with appropriate advice and guidance. The school also holds regular curriculum evenings at which senior staff and year heads provide advice and guidance. All students are given targets for future attainment based upon their current levels of attainment. Regular assessments and frequent interim reports help students and parents recognise the current level of work and how this relates to progress towards the targets. Progress and targets are regularly reviewed, with individual students, by form tutors. Guidance is given and appropriate action planned.

39. Students on GCSE courses have individual targets in each subject. There are very effective systems for identifying and supporting those students who are at risk of not reaching their target grades. When necessary senior staff meet with parents to determine the format of such support. In particular cases, senior leaders may mentor individual students. Further support is provided by sixth form students who mentor Year 11 students in particular subjects. The geography department, for example, has produced an excellent handbook for sixth form mentors that guides them on the subject areas that need to be revised and how to approach topics with younger students. Very highly-attaining students receive individual support from senior staff.
40. In addition to the effectiveness of the school council reported elsewhere, the school effectively uses student evaluations and ideas as part of continuous school improvement.
41. The arrangements for the induction of new students are very good. The school takes students from a wide catchment area and as well as meetings and a visit, all have a day in school to meet their peers before joining the school. Students are able to become familiar with school routines very quickly and are very positive about their transfer from primary school, which they say was very smoothly managed. Most parents are pleased with the good procedures for introducing students to the school and agree transfer generally works very well.
42. Clear guidance and effective advice is given to students and parents as they plan for the transition from Year 9 to Year 10. Similarly, during Years 10 and 11, and particularly towards the end of this period, advice and guidance from school staff and external agencies is very good as nearly all students choose courses to follow in the sixth form. Year 11 students are very well prepared for the sixth form.

### **Sixth form**

Support and guidance are excellent. Overall, the school is acutely aware of students' progress in the sixth form and provides very well judged and timely information, advice and guidance.

### **Main strengths**

- Sixth form students are extremely positive about the school and the support they receive
- Transfer from one stage of a student's education to the next is very effectively managed

### **Commentary**

43. The school has excellent procedures for introducing students, including those joining from other institutions, to the requirements and expectations of the sixth form. Particular care is taken to ensure that students enrol on appropriate courses and their early progress is monitored carefully to ensure that they have settled well into their studies. The overall induction process is very carefully devised to create a blend of social harmony and academic aspiration and helps them to settle into the sixth form quickly and effectively. This is particularly valued by the many students coming into the sixth form from other schools.
44. Procedures to monitor the progress of students throughout their sixth form career are excellent. These include close liaison with Rugby High School so that staff are very well aware of the progress of students in both institutions. Staff clearly know students very well and place a high priority on ensuring very good attendance and punctuality. Students are aware of how well they are doing and in most subjects are given very good guidance on how to improve. Where students' standards slip, early and effective measures are taken to address the situation. The headteacher takes a personal role in this process.
45. Arrangements for preparing students for university application and entrance are excellent. Very clear advice and guidance are provided for all students at appropriate junctures. Students receive advice that is very well tailored to their individual needs. For example, students considering applying for places at Oxford or Cambridge or places at medical school, are very well briefed on the particular entrance requirements of these institutions and the way that the application process should be approached. Students are also helped to prepare for life at university, with guidance on matters such as diet and the management of finance.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are very good and with the wider community and partner institutions they are excellent. These links significantly enhance students' opportunities and have developed since the last inspection. In a very well managed sixth form, links with parents and the wider community are exceptional and provide very good support to students.

### Main strengths

- Links with the community and with partnership institutions support and extend the work of the school very well
- Students in the sixth form are very involved with many community partners and activities
- The wide range of good quality information that is valued by the parents
- The school receives very good support from the Parents' Association and from its past students' association (The Old Laurentians)

### Commentary

46. The school has a clear vision of itself as a 'community grammar school'. It has developed a specialist partnership with the ethnic minority community, providing access to language classes. Students in the sixth form help with ICT for the local Age Concern group. Links are being established to provide facilities for the University of the Third Age and the Education Business Partnership among others. Mathematics and ICT initiatives include Saturday morning classes and are to be extended further, both for students and the community. The Griffin Centre is in use by a wide range of sporting and leisure groups and is recognised as a centre of excellence in table tennis. The community very effectively supported the specialist college status bid.
47. *Rugby Interact*, a joint club between the school and Rugby High School, is part of Rotary and has school members of all ages. It runs the morning session of the school's citizenship conference and includes a presentation from Rotary about their wider role in the community. *Unique South Africa* is a group working towards creating a better life for the people of South Africa and is supported by Interact. Regular visits from members of the community make important contributions to the school's PSRE programme.
48. The very effective collaboration with Rugby High School widens the choice of available subject options and joint classes make an important contribution to students' personal development. Partnership primary schools have access to help with setting up and presenting ICT and speak very highly of the support they receive. The specialist status has had a significant impact and has led to close collaboration with partners. The Independent State School Project with Rugby School and Bishop Wulstan involves science, mathematics and ICT. Students and staff benefit from this involvement and students make a particular contribution to students at Bishop Wulstan.
49. The school recognises how important it is to work closely with parents as part of its drive to raise standards. Parents are confident that the school helps and cares for their children very well. They are very pleased that their children have a place at the school and the school is heavily over-subscribed. They say they have no hesitation about contacting the school with any concerns they may have and comment very favourably on the speed with which the school responds. The school works very effectively with parents to support students' learning and ensure their happiness. Parents are very pleased with the results their children gain and praise the school for the contribution it makes to their children's personal development. Support by parents for school activities such as concerts and sporting events is very strong. Parents are provided with very good quality and regular information about progress and high quality annual school reports which include targets for improvement. The website and the weekly newsletter *The Weekly Word* successfully keep parents abreast of events. Whenever issues arise there is effective and regular contact between parents and pastoral staff.
50. The School Association has raised substantial funds to support the work of the school, including £5,000.00 towards the specialist college bid. They have provided drums, scientific instruments and equipment for physical education. In a two-way process, parents can raise any issues at the regular meeting and staff can request assistance with projects. The past students' organisation made a substantial contribution to the specialist college bid and makes donations for sporting equipment. Students also have access to their sporting facilities. Associate members and the rotary club

support individual students, provide leaving certificates and arrange 'mock' interviews for older students. They are involved in governance and make a valuable contribution to other areas of school life.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall, leadership and management are very good. The excellent leadership of the headteacher has enabled a very effective staff team to be built. Senior staff lead very well. Management is very good. Governance is excellent.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has a very clear direction and is successfully sharing his vision of excellence
- The governors are very knowledgeable about the school and support the headteacher very well in his commitment to maintaining high standards
- This is a school where each individual student matters and inclusion has a high priority
- Governors have ensured the opportunity for daily collective worship but this is not always taken

### **Commentary**

51. The headteacher's vision for the school is inspirational and he is fully committed to maintaining high standards. His vision has been very effectively shared with governors, the senior management team, staff and parents. The school development plan is a very good document which is focused on achievement and reflects the aims and goals of the school. The school is recognised locally and nationally as a model of good practice. For example, the National College for School Leadership has commended the school on the Inner School Variation Project which enables departments to find ways of raising achievement by sharing good practice. Senior managers work very well together as a team. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have the capacity to improve further. They are very knowledgeable about the curriculum and are very good classroom practitioners. The headteacher and senior managers are creative in maximising learning through their links with other schools in the community. For example, their involvement with the Independent State School Partnership benefits the students through their responsibility as mentors for other students in a local catholic school. The headteacher is passionate in his belief that every student has the right to be successful, and many examples can be cited where students have benefited from the inclusive nature of the school. Parents and students believe that the school is very well run.
52. Middle managers lead by example and their leadership is very good overall. Very effective appointments of non-teaching staff to managerial positions have already taken place in preparation for the future workforce reform initiative. The continuing development of staff is seen as a high priority. It provides opportunities for staff to extend their own professional expertise as well as being focused on school priorities. The impact of staff development is monitored effectively through performance management and school development planning. New staff, including newly qualified teachers, are supported very well. The school evaluates its performance rigorously and systematically. Governors and staff at all levels are involved in the process. The school's self-evaluation procedures have been validated by the Investors in People accreditation. Performance data is monitored at both leadership team and departmental level. Very good systems are in place to review data and put in place action plans to address areas of identified weakness.
53. Governors have played key roles in shaping both the vision of the school and its physical development. They have actively promoted the school's view of itself as a 'community grammar school' with an inclusive ethos. They have been closely involved in major developments and are currently working hard on the school's behalf on the proposed development of its playing fields. Through its well structured group of committees, the governors ensure that the school is meeting its statutory obligations. They rigorously analyse the school's performance and are able to hold the school to account. Governors are well aware of the school's strengths and, through ongoing monitoring and professional dialogue, maintain a focus on the areas for improvement. The rigour of this monitoring is exemplified by continually referring back to the last inspection to ensure that its action plan was implemented. They regularly re-visit the school development plan to ensure that it is meeting its targets. Governors bring considerable expertise to their roles and this is highly appreciated by senior management. They are aware of the opportunities and challenges the school faces.

54. Together with the strong partnership between the school, parents and the community and the very positive attitude of students, aids to raising achievement also include the commitment of the teaching and non-teaching staff to the aims and values of the school.

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

| Income and expenditure (£) |           | Balances (£)                        |        |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Total income               | 2,523,439 | Balance from previous year          | 5,003  |
| Total expenditure          | 2,508,442 | Balance carried forward to the next | 20,000 |
| Expenditure per pupil      | 3,354     |                                     |        |

55. Financial management is very good. Financial resources are well targeted to support planned developments. Every opportunity is taken to reduce expenditure through negotiation to achieve best value for money. Through its continual self-evaluation, challenge and rigorous systems, the school is demonstrating, very effectively, the implementation of best value principles.

**Sixth form**

As in the main school, leadership and management are very good and governance is excellent.

**Main strengths**

- Leadership has developed a very good team of tutors
- Links with Rugby High School are very well managed

**Commentary**

56. Leadership of the sixth form is very good because it is very effectively focused on enabling all students to do very well. At this stage of their education many students join the school, widening the attainment on entry. Management of the sixth form is very effective. The very good practice of monitoring and evaluation in the main school is continued in the sixth form where the tutors have been developed into a very effective team. Collaboration is a particular feature of the sixth form because of its close development of the curriculum and timetabling with Rugby High School, which enables students to have opportunities to study a broader range of subjects at A-level. Governance of the sixth form reflects the same excellence as in the main school. The area review of post-16 provision hailed the school as a model of good practice and stated that this arrangement was an 'excellent exemplar'. Students speak very highly of all staff, but particularly the headteacher and the leadership team.

**OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

**Work related learning**

Overall effectiveness of the provision for work related learning is good.

**Main strengths**

- All Year 11 students go on a well-planned work placement
- The school has established very good links with the local businesses
- The cross-curricular implications for work related learning are well coordinated and managed
- There are appropriate plans to build on what is currently working effectively and to strengthen other aspects within subjects and the pastoral programme

**Commentary**

57. The school has taken this new initiative very seriously. The leadership team has a very good knowledge of work related learning and is well aware of and prepared to implement statutory requirements. Oversight and coordination of the different aspects are very well led and managed. A number of very effective strategies have been identified in the development plan. Middle managers are each carrying out an audit that, in time, will provide the information key staff will need in order to review and monitor the opportunities and effectiveness for work related learning across the curriculum. The school has begun this process thoroughly and conscientiously.

58. The school has some important strengths to build on, for example its links with industry and the work experience programme that Year 11 and 12 students take part in. There is recognition that new opportunities can be created within subjects and as part of extra-curricular provision, and an appropriate programme for training and an audit has begun.
59. The work experience programme is very well coordinated and managed across the school. Several examples were recorded which support the effectiveness of this programme. Students were very appreciative of the opportunities provided, both to gain a wider understanding of the world of work outside their chosen career and in helping them decide whether their choice of career would satisfy their aspirations and ambitions. The school is very keen to keep the experience of work 'alive' and on their return to school students take part in activities that build on and encourage them to reflect on the experience. Two very good examples were observed. The first was an assembly led by a senior executive and local employer who supports the school. His presentation explained the benefits, to both the host companies and to students, and encouraged students to be ambitious. Other activities were followed up in English and drama. In an English lesson, students designed a leaflet to prompt next year's students into considering the importance of cooperation, teamwork, and interpersonal skills.
60. Students are well prepared and have a good understanding of enterprise and employability. There is an established programme of interviews. There are many opportunities for students to demonstrate initiative and decision-making, for example through the school council, the prefect system and during tutorials and assemblies. The citizenship programme also makes a significant contribution.



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

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

#### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

##### English

Provision in English is very good.

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

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

##### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons are very well planned
- Students' thinking is very well developed by astute questioning
- There is a very business like atmosphere in lessons
- In some lessons, students do not have sufficient opportunity to develop their speaking and listening skills
- At GCSE, students gain fewer top grades in English Literature than they do in English Language

##### Commentary

##### Examination results

61. In the national tests taken in 2004 by 14 year olds, results were very high when compared with the national average, but below the median of similar schools. Over the previous three years, the trend in results had been rising faster than the national trend.
62. In 2004, GCSE results in English language were very high when compared with the national average. They were below the median for similar schools but the difference was marginal. English literature results were significantly above the national average, although the proportion of students obtaining the highest grades (A\* and A) was not as good as in English language.

##### Standards and achievement

63. When students enter the school, their attainment in English is very high. Examinations at both 14 and 16 reflect the same very high standard. The standard of students' writing seen during the inspection was well above average, with students in all years producing accurate, sustained and fluent pieces of writing that show understanding of some demanding literature. For example, Year 11 students write convincingly about the characters in *Of Mice and Men*. Standards of reading are well above average. In some of the lessons observed, students displayed very good ability to formulate arguments and discuss issues. Year 11 students discussed their recent work experience with maturity and analysed poetry from other cultures with real insight into language and meaning. Standards of speaking and listening overall are thus well above average. High expectations and carefully devised tasks enable students to achieve very well.

##### Teaching and learning

64. Because English teachers possess very good subject knowledge, they are able to ensure that lessons are both wide ranging and thought provoking. Their skilful questioning challenges students to think for themselves and to penetrate below the surface of issues and texts. This emphasis on close reading is a characteristic feature of the teaching and elicits a very good response from the students. For example, Year 8 students reacted with interest to a lesson that required them to undertake close analysis of a key speech from *The Tempest*.

65. The very good planning of lessons provides a structure that leads to very good learning. Teachers have clear aims for their lessons, although these are sometimes formulated in terms of the activities the students will undertake, rather than what they will be expected to learn. The aims of lessons are always explained to the students and this helps them to learn very effectively and contributes to a business like ethos. This sense of purpose also fosters the confidence of the students and encourages them to participate in lessons. The pace of lessons is very brisk, ensuring that students remain engaged in their work. Very good relationships between teachers and students result in a pleasant working atmosphere. In some instances, teachers miss opportunities to afford students the chance to explain their ideas, explore the implications and thus clarify their thinking.
66. Students understand both their current National Curriculum levels or likely GCSE grades and their targets in these areas. They have high aspirations and a realistic understanding of how to improve. Some good examples of the use of ICT were observed, although current limited access to facilities means that it is not fully structured into the scheme of work.

### **Leadership and management**

67. The leadership of the subject is very clearly focused on the further raising of standards. There is a very strong sense of direction and very good organisation. By monitoring closely the quality of teaching and scrutinising samples of students' work, the leadership maintains a clear understanding of patterns of work in English and is able to formulate realistic priorities for improvement. English teachers work together very well as a team, so enhancing the overall coherence of the students' experience in the subject.
68. The last inspection report noted concerns about student progress in Years 7 to 9 and about the organisation and monitoring of the English curriculum. Since the previous inspection, both these issues have been very successfully tackled whilst standards, especially by the end of Year 9, have risen.

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

69. Students have standards of literacy that are well above average. Across the curriculum, they use technical language correctly and show the ability to write accurately and at length. They are articulate speakers, able to explain their ideas very well. The school has selected appropriate elements of the government's strategy for promoting literacy to provide a framework for school developments. The implementation of the school's plans in this respect is at an early stage.
70. In most subjects careful attention is paid to literacy. In modern languages, for example, the standard of reading is a strength. In a religious education lesson, students displayed a mature ability to put forward two sides of an argument about the treatment of religion in the media. However, there are instances in which errors in literacy are not corrected in students' writing.

### **French**

Provision in French is very good.

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

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are significantly above average
- Teaching is very good overall and as a result students learn well
- Students have very positive attitudes and work well together
- The current structure of the course in Years 7 to 9 does not move students quickly enough onto higher levels of language
- The subject is well resourced, including very good library provision

## **Commentary**

### **Examination results**

71. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were significantly above those reported nationally and an improvement on the previous year. GCSE results in 2004 were significantly above the national average. As in 2003, students made greater progress in French, compared to the other subjects they studied, than is the case nationally.

### **Standards and achievement**

72. In the current Year 9, students show particular strengths in reading and writing, though a number are still not secure at the national benchmark Level 5. This is because the current structure of the course in Years 7 to 9 does not introduce past and future verb tenses early enough. In the current Year 11, standards are well above average, with speaking and writing as particular strengths. Generally, students achieve very well. A Year 8 class worked intensively on preparation for their forthcoming trip to France and a Year 10 class used their listening and writing skills very effectively in combination as they planned seeking information from tourist offices in French-speaking countries. Students of all levels of attainment made good progress. Students' attitudes to French are very good: they collaborate well and learn willingly and enthusiastically.

### **Teaching and learning**

73. Among the best features of teaching are the routine use of French by teachers, well-planned lessons which are conducted at a brisk and challenging pace, effective use of ICT, good strategies for developing students' skills alongside their knowledge and understanding, and very good assessment and marking. Students know what they need to do to improve. The school's assessment system (PINT) is well embedded and students are aware of their progress against National Curriculum levels. In response to the very good teaching, students learn very well. Their reading and listening skills are developed in a structured way, their ICT skills are regularly and effectively applied and their progress accelerates sharply in Years 10 and 11.

### **Leadership and management**

74. Leadership and management are very good. Very committed leadership has shown vision and a willingness to innovate, for example in the focus on reading and the introduction of new GCSE syllabuses. The department is a close-knit team, which is well organised and managed. Documentation is good, notably in the help it gives to teachers. Development plan targets are appropriate, though the planned earlier introduction of tenses could be advanced further. New staff are very well inducted and supported. Monitoring is well established and includes close cooperation with the German department. Library provision is very good and it, and the annual French study visit, are well used to enrich the curriculum. The opportunity to use ICT has been audited and its use is effectively planned in schemes of work.
75. Since the last inspection, standards, students' achievement and attitudes have remained well above average. Teaching has improved, as has the use of ICT. Students' learning experience is richer and more varied. The department has the capacity to maintain and extend this.

## German

Provision in German is very good.

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

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average and improving
- Teachers are experts in their subject and highly committed to their students
- Students are enthusiastic and learn well, notably in Years 10 and 11
- Students' progress and achievement in Years 7 to 9 are inhibited by the structure of the course

### Commentary

#### Examination results

76. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above those reported nationally. They were an improvement on the previous year. GCSE results in 2004 were significantly above the national average, similar to 2003 figures.

#### Standards and achievement

77. In the current Year 9, standards are notably above average in the breadth of students' knowledge and in their ability to speak and write competently in German. However, their late learning of past and future tenses inhibits their ability to use German creatively for their own purposes. Students in the current Year 11 are already attaining higher standards than last year's cohort. In a lesson seen, they described people and personalities in fluent, accurate German. Their written work is of a high standard, covering a good range of topics of personal interest. Overall, students achieve very well. A Year 7 class had made rapid progress and students spoke enthusiastically. Year 10 students practised listening intensively in the language laboratory, and assessed their own progress with confidence and maturity.

#### Teaching and learning

78. Teaching ranged from good to excellent. Teaching in Years 7, 10 and 11 is better than in Years 8 and 9, where it is good. Teachers use their excellent language skills to provide very good models of German for students. Lessons are conducted almost exclusively in German. Lively and challenging interaction engages students and promotes very good learning at all levels of ability, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Students' work is diligently assessed and they are given clear guidelines as to how to improve. Students have positive attitudes to German and these, together with the good relationships in the classroom, help students learn and achieve very well.

#### Leadership and management

79. The subject is led with enthusiasm and commitment. The small department works as a cohesive team and is well managed. Development planning has identified an appropriate agenda for raising standards. However, the current structure of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 does not give students early enough access to past and future tenses. This has the effect of inhibiting their progress to higher National Curriculum levels. The move to a modular GCSE examination has resulted in a clear improvement in standards. The curriculum is enriched by an annual trip to Germany. Library provision is very good.
80. Since the last inspection, standards, the quality of learning and students' positive attitudes have been maintained. Teaching and its resourcing have improved. The department has the capacity to maintain and extend this progress.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is very good.

|                       | Year 9    | Year 11   |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Standards             | Very high | Very high |
| Achievement           | Very good | Very good |
| Teaching and learning | Very good | Very good |

  

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

### Main strengths

- Students consistently attain very high standards in the external examinations
- Standards are raised through the use of well prepared starter activities, lessons having a brisk pace and the good use of homework
- Very good teacher subject knowledge results in students being taught the correct mathematical language and developing good thinking skills
- Teacher-student relationships are good and classes are pleasant environments in which to learn

### Commentary

#### Examination results

81. Results in the Year 9 tests, in 2004, were very high compared with national averages and well above the median when compared with similar schools. They maintained a consistency apparent over the last four years. GCSE results in 2004 were very high compared with the national average and with similar schools. All students gained grades A\* to C and half gained grades A\* or A. GCSE results have also been consistent over the last four years. Higher-attaining students also studied for a GCSE in statistics. Results were significantly above average with nearly all candidates gaining the highest grades. This year such students are also studying for a Free Standing Mathematics Unit, which covers many of the topics usually introduced in Year 12.

#### Standards and achievement

82. Standards seen reflect examination results. Students achieve very well in all areas of mathematics, with major strengths in data handling and algebra. Students apply skills well and transfer them between different topics. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson they used skills that they had learnt in algebra to evaluate data in statistics. Students confidently articulate their findings and are able to explain their mathematical thinking to the rest of the class. Well-planned exercises at the start of lessons serve to focus students' attention and sharpen their mental mathematics. Good investigational skills were seen in well-presented coursework in mathematics. Teaching in all sets ensures students of different abilities achieve well. In response to enthusiastic teaching, students behave well and work hard. By the end of Year 9 students can construct cumulative frequency curves and use them to find the median value and the interquartile range. In Year 11, students can solve simultaneous equations involving a combination of quadratic and linear functions.

#### Teaching and learning

83. The quality of teaching ranges between excellent and unsatisfactory and is very good overall. Lessons are characterised by very good student-teacher relationships which result in a pleasant ambience within the classrooms. This means that students are not frightened of being wrong when answering questions and teachers can stop minor acts of indiscipline without interrupting the learning experience. Very good teacher subject knowledge means that students are taught the correct mathematical language and are well prepared for the examinations. Students develop good thinking skills and learn to enjoy the subject. In the unsatisfactory lesson students were not sufficiently challenged and their resulting weaker behaviour was not well managed. In the better lessons teachers have high expectations of the students and ensure a brisk pace. They provide very good individual tuition and encouragement to support learning. The routine setting of homework successfully reinforces learning from lessons.

## Leadership and management

84. Leadership importantly focuses on maintaining the high standards. Teachers form a committed and mutually supportive team which evaluates its work and seeks ways to improve the provision. Having teaching rooms close allows for easy exchange of ideas. Recent developments include broadening the range of qualifications offered and integrating the use of computer-linked data projectors into teaching strategies. The students' ability to use mathematical reasoning in investigations, criticised at the last inspection, has improved since that time.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

85. Students' numeracy skills are well above average and are sufficiently developed to help them cope with mathematical work in other subjects. In German, students are required to use weights and measures. Students plot graphs in science and collect and analyse data. The use of graphs features in Year 9 geography and higher up the school students use statistics to support their coursework. In Year 11 music, students engage in practical work considering the construction of scales and sequences of chords. The provision overall is good.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is very good.

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

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

## Main strengths

- GCSE results have been consistently high for several years
- The teachers are very well qualified subject specialists
- Students and teachers share good relationships and work together in a cooperative manner
- Teachers use a wide range of teaching styles which includes the use of computers

## Commentary

### Examination results

86. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9, in 2004, were very high. These results have risen since the last inspection. The trend has been above the national pattern. The results are in line with those from similar schools. GCSE results, in 2004, were well above the national median but well below the median for similar schools. Too many students did not gain at least a grade C with several not reaching their predicted grade.

### Standards and achievement

87. Students enter the school with attainment that is very high and maintain this level with current standards, in both Years 9 and 11, reflecting the examination results. For example, students in Year 9, when reviewing magnetic fields, were able to discuss all aspects accurately and in detail. In Year 11, students actively engaged in discussions regarding temperature control in the human body and were able to explain the concept of negative feedback with confidence. Students produce coursework of a high standard from a wide variety of investigations. Students are well supported and guided by the teachers and have a very good attitude to their learning. This leads to them learning and achieving very well.

### Teaching and learning

88. All the teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use this to explain concepts well. The course is organised very well with well-planned modules. The topics they include are challenging, relevant and engage students' interest in class. Teachers are skilled at controlling question and answer

sessions in lessons. They are able to gauge the prior understanding of their students and then build upon this. The students enjoy practical lessons, and these are carried out in a safe and mature manner. Students' attitudes are very good and they react in a very positive manner to lessons that they find of interest and engaging. However, if they are not fully occupied, some students have the tendency to chat and lose attention. Students respond very well to the use of computers in lessons but this resource is not always readily available. All lessons are well planned and follow an agreed common format that ensures there is good pace.

### Leadership and management

89. The department has recognised the issues that need tackling in order to raise attainment further. Following an in-depth review with senior managers it has been acknowledged that a more effective monitoring of students' progress is needed to raise standards even higher. A challenging development plan has been produced. The introduction of a double science coordinated course, based on regular modular testing, is proving successful and motivating for the students. The opportunity for students to study the three sciences, separately, is very appropriate for those intending to study any of the sciences in the sixth form. There is a clear, shared desire by all the teachers to raise standards while ensuring that the subject is enjoyed by students. The committed team of teachers is very well supported by specialist technicians. Standards at the end of Year 9 have been maintained at their high level since the last inspection and teaching has improved. The use of computers is better and the monitoring of students' progress is now a regular feature.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

|                                    | Year 9        | Year 11       |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Standards                          | Above average | Above average |
| Achievement                        | Good          | Satisfactory  |
| Teaching and learning              | Good          | Good          |
| Leadership                         | Good          |               |
| Management                         | Good          |               |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good          |               |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and much improved planning is leading to rising achievement for all
- Effective leadership is bringing about improvement
- The use of ICT by teachers to enliven lessons is good but opportunities for students to use ICT to support their learning in subjects is less well developed
- Whilst students now achieve well, there are gaps in their knowledge because of the relatively late adoption of the national strategy

### Commentary

#### Examination results

90. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2004, were above those reported nationally. This is the first year in which all students in Year 11 are taking an ICT qualification. Thirteen students took GCSE ICT in 2004 and eleven gained a pass at grades A\* to C. The numbers were too low to make valid comparisons with national results.

#### Standards and achievement

91. Standards on entry are average in this subject. Students in Year 7 are benefiting from experiencing the National Strategy from their arrival at the school where the previously too narrow a focus on ICT skills has been rectified by its adoption. By the end of Year 9, all students are able to create documents using a range of word processing skills and integrate these with spreadsheets. These students are able to find and sort data and use formulae. They have sophisticated skills enabling them to test hypotheses. Standards seen during the inspection in Year 11 were above course expectations because all students were working at a level in line with a GCSE pass at grades A\* to

C. However, the proportion of students working at the highest level (A\* and A) is below that found in other subjects and the attitude of too many students to the subject was negative resulting in a lack of effort and unsatisfactory achievement. This problem is confined to Year 11 where, to meet the criteria for a successful specialist college bid, students were required to follow a full GCSE course having originally chosen to follow a short course. In all other year groups students have good attitudes and are keen to do well and are achieving well.

### **Teaching and learning**

92. In Years 7 to 9, adoption of the National Strategy enables all teachers to deliver well-structured lessons that lead to students learning about ICT in a systematic way and covering the requirements of the national curriculum.
93. In Year 10 students are well motivated and benefit from stimulating and enthusiastic teaching with a good focus on the examination requirements and how to gain more marks. Good levels of intellectual challenge were observed and transitions from whole class teaching to independent work at computers were well managed so that students made very good progress at a brisk pace. Students worked through a series of key questions designed to guide them into gaining high marks for their coursework. Where teaching was less successful in Year 11, the late arrival of students was not challenged and good classroom routines were not enforced. As a result, students felt the subject to be taken less seriously than others. Around a third of the class made very little effort while another third worked well independently. In the best lessons there is a very strong focus on assessment and the requirements of the examination. Learning opportunities are usually varied well so that students moved from whole-class teacher inputs, through discussion to independent computer work, followed by more teacher input without any part becoming too long to maintain student interest. Students know how well they are doing and how to improve and in most cases this helps them to achieve well. However, in Year 11 many students are content to do just enough to get a grade C when they have the potential to do better.

### **Leadership and management**

94. The leadership of ICT is now good. There is a clear vision for the subject and its development shared between the school and departmental leadership. There has been significant improvement over the last two years including the implementation of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 and an ICT GCSE course for all students in Years 10 and 11. Leadership is driving change, and developments in the subject are raising standards. The management has been good in implementing change but there has been insufficient time for the effect of innovations to be seen fully. The infrastructure is much improved and the ratio of students to computers is better than the national average for secondary schools.

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

95. The use of ICT in subjects is much improved since the last report and is satisfactory. Really good examples of the use of ICT were seen in several subjects. For example, Year 9 students taking Latin GCSE in just one year are taught through video conferencing, and an AS-level music technology course is taught to a group of students from Years 8, 9, 10 and 12. Teachers, across the curriculum, use data projectors effectively to bring their teaching alive. However, overall, ICT is used more by teachers in lessons than by students. The school is working in partnership with the local authority to support the use of ICT across the curriculum and there are good arrangements to manage this provision. All staff have received training and teaching assistants play an important role in supporting staff and raising their confidence.



## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is very good.

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination results are significantly above average
- Very good use is made of assessment to identify targets for improvement
- There are very limited opportunities in Years 7 to 9 to develop investigative skills through field work
- The development of ICT skills is very good in some lessons although opportunities are being missed

#### Commentary

##### Examination Results

96. Students arrive at school with standards well above the national average. Results of teacher assessments, in 2004, at the end of Year 9 were well above those reported nationally. GCSE results in 2004 were significantly above the national average with an upward trend over the last three years.

##### Standards and achievement

97. The standards seen in the current Year 9 represent very good achievement during students' first three years in school. Most students have a good use and understanding of subject specific vocabulary. The development of geographical skills is particularly notable. Most students have developed considerable skills of analysis and can interpret data and diagrams to make appropriate judgements. For example, they can use and analyse information from graphs and a range of data to explain the distribution of population in France.
98. By the end of Year 11, students use their more developed skills effectively to describe urban land use and understand reasons for the changes in that use. Most students have a good understanding of the causes and effects of natural hazards such as earthquakes and volcanoes. Key words are emphasised in lessons, and good question and answer sessions in many lessons are effective in developing speaking and listening skills. Most lessons also involve students in group discussion and decision making. There are limited opportunities for extended writing, although written work is generally of a high standard. Opportunities for students to analyse and interpret graphs and basic statistics are good for younger students and are very good in Years 10 and 11 resulting in the high standard of coursework produced by students. Opportunities for students to develop their ICT skills are developing. Some very good examples were seen in course work in Year 11 and in several units of work in other year groups, although opportunities are being missed and access to computers is restricted.

##### Teaching and learning

99. Teaching staff are enthusiastic specialists who have very good relationships with students. Most students bring very positive attitudes to lessons and are keen to succeed, with the consequence that learning is sometimes better than teaching. Key factors in the best teaching are the planning of lessons, combined with the use of a wide range of teaching methods and resources. Significant factors in the very good progress made by students in most lessons were the desire of students to learn and to achieve, and the opportunities provided for students to take responsibility for their own

learning. In an excellent Year 9 lesson, students achieved very well as they developed their knowledge and understanding of coastal erosion. The teacher used a wide range of very good resources, had very high expectations of all the students and generated a very active learning environment where all students were keen to succeed and were interested and involved in their work. Where teaching was not as effective, students were not sufficiently challenged or given enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. Marking of work generally provides very good information to help students improve and relates closely to National Curriculum or GCSE levels. Monitoring of students' progress is very good, and challenging targets are being set. Field work is not being used to develop investigative skills in Years 7 to 9. However, in Year 11 students investigate the development of Rugby's central business district and use their investigative and ICT skills very effectively to produce work of a consistently very high standard.

### Leadership and management

100. Management of the department is good. There is a clear focus on achievement. Opportunities for sharing good practice and for the effective monitoring of teaching and learning are developing, although there are no formal arrangements for observation of teaching within the department. Day-to-day management of the department is very good and the committed staff work very hard to maintain the good standards in the department. Schemes of work are very good working documents and are under constant review. They link clearly with departmental assessment procedures but do not clearly identify extension work to ensure that the highest-attaining students are consistently challenged. The department development plan identifies clear and appropriate areas for improvement.
101. Since the last inspection, unsatisfactory teaching has been eradicated. Marking of work and the monitoring of progress has improved, it identifies clear targets for improvement and is good. Oral work in lessons is now very good. There remains scope for increasing the proportion of A\* and A grades.

### History

Provision in history is very good.

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good command of the subject and explanations are exceptionally fluent
- Teachers have a very good understanding of how students learn and teach lessons that are well structured and consistently challenging
- Learning is notable for the quality of the thinking and analytical skills being developed by the students but little use is currently made of ICT

### Commentary

#### Examination results

102. The results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2004, were well above those reported nationally. In 2004, GCSE results were significantly above average, although the proportion of top grades was below that of most other subjects in the school.

#### Standards and achievement

103. By the end of Year 9, students show very good knowledge and understanding of the historical events and personalities they are studying. Listening skills are significantly above average and students follow instructions well. They are confident in extracting information from a broad range of

written and pictorial sources. Thinking skills, through work on processing and evaluating information, are very well developed. Students are able to synthesise and adapt what they learn in class and to organise ideas in logical and coherent forms. Although some answers lack detail, students make very good progress in sequencing and linking historical information.

104. By the end of Year 11, students' historical knowledge and understanding has deepened. They are able to develop and substantiate arguments, and show perception in their answers. Overall, students have a well-developed ability to ask, and answer questions. They are responsive to the directions of their teachers and are well motivated to take responsibility in pursuing independent lines of historical enquiry.

### Teaching and learning

105. Teaching seen during the inspection was never less than good. Leadership provides very good, even excellent models of practice that is based on high expectations. Lessons are very well planned and paced, and a regular change of activities is used to stimulate interest. Students learn very well because they know what is expected of them and carefully selected tasks have sufficient challenge to keep them working very productively. Questioning is skilful and involves students in actively developing historical judgements.
106. The department provides very good opportunities for the development of the full range of historical skills, including literacy. Homework offers regular opportunities to develop techniques of independent learning. Teachers are generally conscientious in checking books and grade levels and assessment criteria are shared with students. The best marking tells students in detail what they need to do to improve. Following a school-wide initiative, the department intends to integrate more extension activities to raise the performance of the highest-attaining students. Little use is made of ICT.

### Leadership and management

107. A firm commitment to improve student attainment and interest in the subject is reflected in recent changes to the curriculum in Year 10. Key policies are in place. Performance management and self-evaluation procedures are clearly defined. Appropriate priorities, including the early identification and mentoring of lower-attaining students and an increase in assessment opportunities, are being set for the future. The department recognises that there is scope to improve the quality of schemes of work by adding key points of reference. Resources, including those in the library, are well managed. There is scope to build the profile of the subject in the school through the provision of extra-curricular activities and a wider range of educational visits. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly with respect to the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11, the overall accommodation of different teaching and learning styles, and in the quality of planning and assessment practices.

### Religious education

Provision in religious education is good.

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership ensures consistent and specialist provision for all students
- Opportunities are regularly given for students to reflect on spiritual and moral issues
- The arrangements for assessing students' work are very good
- A few students do not achieve as well as they should because of low level disruption

## Commentary

### Examination results

108. All students are entered for the GCSE short course through the PSRE programme. Results, in 2004, showed a wider spread than in any other subject and were lower than the previous year. There are no national comparators available. Nearly all the students who took the full GCSE gained grades A\* to C but numbers were too small for meaningful national comparisons.

### Standards and achievement

109. All students make good progress through the religious education part of the PSRE course in Years 7 to 9. Students have a broad knowledge of the major world faiths and present their notes in specially organised booklets. By Year 11, they understand and can articulate the difficulties created for religious believers when world disasters cause pain and suffering. Year 7 students' personal development was progressed when considering various artists' images of Jesus in a lesson taken by the *Youth for Christ* organisation. One image clearly disturbed them because, as one student put it, 'that represents torture.' They were moved when it was revealed that the artist had himself suffered torture and could therefore represent in his work the suffering of Jesus.

### Teaching and learning

110. In the most successful lessons, students participated well in good debate, discussing topics with confidence. The good subject knowledge of teachers developed students' knowledge and understanding. Time was given for students to reflect on what they had just discussed or seen, developing their awareness of issues which could have a profound effect on their own lives. Artefacts were used well to illustrate the symbolic nature of religion; as for example in a Year 8 lesson on Sikhism when students were considering the meaning of the 5 Ks. Good relationships were evident in most lessons. In the least successful lessons, a few students were off-task and caused low-level disruption because they did not value participation in the subject, but this was not the view of the majority whose attitudes were good. On occasion, the teacher intervened in students' answers too soon, reducing the opportunity for assessing what students had learnt.

### Leadership and management

111. Analysis of students' performance in tests has produced a clear programme for raising achievement. Assessment is in line with the Locally Agreed Syllabus and students know what National Curriculum levels they are attaining. A clear commitment to staff development can be seen. Arrangements for visiting speakers are well organised. Good leadership has resulted in the improvement since the last inspection. A consistent approach to teaching and learning has been achieved because fewer staff are involved in delivering lessons. All students now take the short course GCSE and some opt to have extra lunchtime lessons to take the full course examination. Timetabled time is now appropriate and standards have risen. The quality of teaching has improved and more resources have been provided.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is very good.

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are very well structured and students are supported effectively to enable them to work independently
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and extends students' learning
- Exemplar material is used very well in lessons to raise students' expectations
- Assessment is used effectively to set targets and monitor progress in Years 10 and 11, but is inconsistent in Years 7 to 9

### Commentary

#### Examination results

112. Results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2004, were above those reported nationally. GCSE courses are offered in three aspects of the subject. Overall, results in 2004 were significantly above the national average.

#### Standards and achievement

113. Students start the school in Year 7 with average skills in design and technology. During Years 7 to 9 they follow a course based upon resistant materials and graphics. By the end of Year 9, they have made good progress and have a comprehensive range of skills which they are able to apply in a problem solving approach to the subject. Year 11 students reach a very good standard of work in their GCSE design projects. Students use ICT very well to support and extend their design work, run simulation exercises and, in Years 10 and 11, to present their GCSE coursework to a high standard. Students enjoy practical work, take pride in their work and make high-quality practical products.

#### Teaching and learning

114. Teaching quickly establishes routines which enable students to work safely and competently in lessons. Teachers give very good individual support, extending students' knowledge and skills appropriately, and enabling them to work well independently. A strength of the teaching is the planning of well-structured lessons that include a range of activities which keep students focused on the task. Teachers use exemplar materials and demonstrate skills very effectively so that students understand what they are expected to achieve. In one lesson, a teacher disassembled a piece of furniture to explain the effectiveness of the design while students contributed by suggesting how simple changes could be made to improve the quality of the product. Learning is not always consolidated at the end of lessons. In Years 10 and 11, assessment is used well to motivate students and set individual target grades. In Years 7 to 9, students' work is inconsistently marked and comments are not always helpful in informing students what they need to do to improve.

#### Leadership and management

115. There is a strong vision for development within the department which focuses on improving teaching and learning. Structures are in place to support this. Good team work is a strength and ideas are shared within the department to the benefit of the students' achievement.

### VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

#### Art and design

Provision in art and design is satisfactory.

|                                    | Year 9         | Year 11            |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Standards                          | Average        | Well above average |
| Achievement                        | Unsatisfactory | Good               |
| Teaching and learning              | Satisfactory   | Good               |
| Leadership                         | Good           |                    |
| Management                         | Satisfactory   |                    |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory   |                    |

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results have improved and standards build well on students' prior attainment
- Actions to bring about changes and improvements are being well led
- The work planned for students in Years 7 to 9 is not challenging enough
- Students do not have enough information about what teachers will assess, how well they are progressing and what they can do to achieve their potential
- Students' very positive attitudes have a strong impact on their achievements

## **Commentary**

### **Examination results**

116. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2004, were well above those reported nationally. In recent years the numbers of GCSE candidates have been too small to make meaningful comparisons with national averages. However, the results demonstrate a significant rise in the number of A\* and A grades. In 2003 and 2004 over half the candidates attained these high grades.

### **Standards and achievement**

117. In Years 7 to 9, the time available for the subject is significantly lower than in most schools and contributes to students' underachievement. The curriculum students experience is very narrow and in some lessons the limited time was not used to maximum effect. The units of work were not sufficiently well planned and structured to give students a clear understanding of what was expected of them and how the work would be assessed. As a result, a significant number marked time or were not purposefully engaged in managing their own time and learning. A significant proportion of Year 9 portfolios, along with sketchbooks and other practical work, had insufficient work demonstrating the highest quality.
118. In Years 10 and 11, many continue to develop technical graphics skills. Preparatory work demonstrates an appreciation of layout and composition and pencil drawings show high levels of control. Some students use computer packages to manipulate images. The highest-attaining students demonstrate, through their notes and commentaries, their ability to analyse the relationship between their own work and work by past and practising illustrators and designers. Fewer students choose a fine art approach but examples of large-scale oil paintings were seen. A weakness is that many students turn too frequently to books and downloaded images from the Internet rather than working from first hand experience.

### **Teaching and learning**

119. Teachers have good specialist skills and a secure understanding of GCSE requirements to inform their assessments and the feedback they give to students. Where students share this understanding their time is used productively and their independent learning skills are well supported and developed. Students' very positive attitudes to work and their desire to achieve, strongly impact on their learning. In younger classes, however, because objectives and expectations were not always clearly stated and understood, the time was used less purposefully. Teachers made insufficient use of National Curriculum level descriptors, in their lesson and course planning, to ensure the work was challenging enough and that there was scope for students to demonstrate the breadth and depth of work expected at the highest levels. Overall, these students had insufficient information about their performance and what they could do to improve it. The range of teaching and learning styles was limited and did not fully exploit the students' intellectual and academic potential in both the practical and contextual aspects.

### **Leadership and management**

120. A priority for the school has been to improve standards in public examinations and actions for this have proved very successful. However the development plan rightly goes further than this, recognising the need to raise standards in younger classes, including the development of computer-generated work. The resources allocated for Years 7 to 9 are currently inadequate and, together with the limitations of time and weaknesses in the curriculum, are holding back standards. Since the last inspection standards in Years 7 to 9 have fallen and students opting for examination courses have a limited range of experiences to draw on.

## Music

Provision in music is very good.

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

  

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

### Main strengths

- Students achieve very well because of the high expectations and very good support of their teachers
- Assessment procedures are very good
- Extra-curricular opportunities are very good and support learning very well
- Opportunities for using ICT are much improved since the last inspection

### Commentary

#### Examination results

121. Results of the 2004 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were significantly above the average of those reported nationally. In GCSE results, all students gained grades A\* to C but the small number of students means that national comparisons are inappropriate.

#### Standards and achievement

122. Students currently in Year 9 have very good knowledge of the different elements of music that, for example, enabled them to analyse a popular song in one lesson. They were able to perform a significant section from the song using a combination of their own instruments and keyboards. Their confidence grew rapidly in a lesson, as by the end, they realised the importance of the contribution they were making to the whole very successful performance. Their achievement in this lesson was outstanding because of the excellent way in which the teacher built up the texture of the music. In Year 11, students' compositions are very good. They can develop a musical theme in a particular style using syncopation, sequence and imitation. Appropriate terminology is used throughout and very good use is made of stylistic techniques appropriate to certain instruments, for example a pizzicato cello theme. During the inspection, some very high standards were heard from individual student performances.

#### Teaching and learning

123. Lessons are very well structured and proceed at a brisk pace, keeping students interested and focused on the task. The high-quality musicianship of staff and the challenging tasks motivate students to try their best. Very good questioning and clear explanations enable students to develop their skills and knowledge. They are often encouraged to appraise each other's work at the end of lessons, but sometimes plenaries do not point out new learning experiences. Their work is regularly assessed, against National Curriculum level criteria, giving them ideas as to what they can do to reach a higher level. Students are clear about what they have to do to improve. Very good support is offered to all students, but particularly to those who find tackling the subject a little more difficult. Relationships between students and staff are very strong, and students' attitudes are very good.

#### Leadership and management

124. A very clear vision is evident, focused on improving the opportunities for students and raising achievement. Whilst the team of staff is new, they are already working very effectively together and influencing staff and students. Knowledgeable leadership ensures that good practice is shared, and peer observation of teaching has already taken place. Accommodation is very good and includes a technology suite. An innovation within the curriculum has been the setting up of an AS-level music technology course for those students who are more able or very interested across Years 9 to 13.

This course is in its infancy and it is too early to assess its impact on students' achievement. GCSE lessons are held after school and have been successful in increasing the number of students successfully studying music. Standards are high in other regular musical activities. These include the jazz orchestra, school orchestra and intermediate band. Since the last inspection, the allocation of time to music has increased so that National Curriculum requirements are met and resources improved so that ICT facilities are now sufficient. The quality of teaching is much improved and has contributed to the rise in standards.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is satisfactory.

|                                    | Year 9       | Year 11       |
|------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Standards                          | Average      | Above average |
| Achievement                        | Satisfactory | Good          |
| Teaching and learning              | Good         | Good          |
| Leadership                         | Satisfactory |               |
| Management                         | Satisfactory |               |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |               |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The balance of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 does not allow enough coverage of some of the programmes of study of the National Curriculum
- All students gained grades in the range A\* to C in 2004
- Students achieve well in the common course in Years 10 and 11 as a result of good teaching
- Standards in rugby union throughout the school are well above expectations in relation to students' ages

### Commentary

#### Examination results

125. The subject is a popular option. Results in 2004 were significantly above the national mean. All candidates gained results in the range A\* to C, as they have done since 2002. However, compared to the results in other subjects, the proportion of students gaining the highest grades (A\* and A) was low.

#### Standards and achievement

126. Standards on entry in this subject are below what might be expected national because of the very diverse experience of students in their primary schools. Standards in games in the current Year 9 are above average and students achieve well in this aspect. Achievement in gymnastics, in the time given to it, is satisfactory although standards remain below average. The school has no records of standards achieved in the outdoor and adventurous activities studied earlier. Records of standards achieved in athletics, to be studied again later in the school year, indicate standards and achievement which are satisfactory.
127. In lessons seen in Year 11, students achieve well in hockey and standards are above expectations for their age. As a result of the time available for games and of grouping by capability, standards of rugby union are high throughout the school. Individual students have gained representative honours at both district and county level and school teams are also champions at these levels. The constraints of the timetable during the time of the inspection did not allow observation of any lessons in examination courses. The records maintained by the school indicate that standards being achieved by students currently are no different from those of previous cohorts. In all years, students have a very good knowledge and understanding of the principles and procedures for warm-up.

#### Teaching and learning

128. Learning outcomes are made clear at the start of lessons so that students know what is expected of them. Lessons are planned very well for structure and pace. Teachers recognise the prior learning of the different groups they teach and provide appropriately challenging tasks so that students learn



and achieve well. Teachers' enthusiastic approach creates a very positive learning atmosphere and motivates students very well. As a result, students remain on task and are keen to improve the quality of their work. Very effective use of questions involves students well and ensures they develop their understanding, for example of the correct terminology and tactical approaches in games. Teachers circulate well and effective use of praise and constructive criticism makes students aware of their attainment. This was effectively used in a Year 8 gymnastics lesson to modify the pace and direction of the lesson. Teachers gave good evaluative feedback at the end of lessons, but did not always give students enough scope to discuss what they felt they had learnt. Similarly, students are not always given enough opportunity to develop their evaluative skills by being asked to constructively criticise the quality of other's work. There is not enough use of ICT to support students' learning in practical lessons. Marking of theory work in the examination course has been unsatisfactory. Students have not been given sufficient guidance on their standard of work and how it could be improved. This has had a detrimental effect and is the main reason why the proportion of higher grades has been low. Younger students' grasp of assessment and evaluation, both of their own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of their peers, is not well developed.

### **Leadership and management**

129. There is a very good team ethos and a commitment to providing high quality provision for physical education. Leadership has provided a focus for improving results in the GCSE theory course. Action has been taken to increase the proportion of students gaining the highest grades. Lesson observations have resulted in the sharing of good practice, particularly in games lessons. However, leadership has been slow to address the curriculum balance issue identified by the previous report. Although students are now assessed in games, the overall assessment required at the end of Year 9 does not take enough account of the breadth of activities students follow.

### **Comment on general sporting provision in the school**

130. All students have access to three periods of quality physical activity per week, which is above the government's national public service agreement target. This is enhanced further by the opportunities to take part in a very good range of extra-curricular activities throughout the year, particularly competitive fixtures and squad training sessions. Attendance at extra-curricular activities is high and sixty-six students have gained representative honours at either district or county level. Year 12 students have weekly timetabled provision of physical education. The department is involved in a local schools sports partnership scheme but has yet to become involved in the wider Physical Education School Sport and Club Links Strategy (PESSCL). Links with local community sporting organisations are of direct benefit to students and a centre for excellence in table tennis is attached to the school.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

The school does not offer a vocational course at this level.

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

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Citizenship is formally taught in Years 7 and 9 by a dedicated team of three teachers
- A scheme of work has been produced for citizenship in the main school to enable teachers to plan their work
- There is insufficient formal monitoring or evaluation of the effectiveness of the contribution by other subjects to citizenship
- Students have a good awareness of citizenship and their role as citizens

### **Commentary**

131. Students have identified citizenship lessons in Years 7, 9, 10 and 11 as part of the PSRE programme. In Year 8, citizenship is taught through other subjects. Teachers are helped in their planning for citizenship by a comprehensive programme of work. An audit has identified where and how other subjects contribute.

132. Standards of work seen in Years 7 and 9 were average. Scrutiny of Year 9 recorded work showed that students are developing a secure knowledge and understanding of issues concerning the law. In the week of the inspection, students in Year 7 were exploring issues of the role of members of parliament, the media and politics. Discussion with students in the main school shows they have developed a good awareness of the subject and their role as citizens. School council elections actively involve students in the democratic process. A group of Year 10 students had organised an auction, to support the tsunami appeal, held during the week of inspection.
133. Insufficient lessons were available to allow secure judgements to be made on the quality of teaching. However, it is clear that students in Years 7 and 9 benefit from being taught the subject by a small group of enthusiastic teachers.
134. New leadership and management are developing well and providing a focus for the teaching of the subject. The subject development plan reflects the strong commitment to improve provision, for example by introducing accredited courses. Statutory requirements are met, and monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, within the citizenship team, is taking place. Although the audit of subject provision has taken place, the monitoring and evaluation of this cross-curricular provision is not yet fully established. The provision of aspects of citizenship has recently received outside recognition in the form of an award from British Telecommunications to fund a project on animal conservation and to share the project with schools in Africa and Brazil as part of global citizenship awareness.
135. Citizenship was not reported on at the time of the previous inspection.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004.

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses*

| Subject                  | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E |         | % gaining grades A-B |         | Average point score |         |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
|                          |                | School               | England | School               | England | School              | England |
| Art and design           | 1              | 100.0                | 70.5    | 100.0                | 14.9    | 60.0                | 24.1    |
| Biology                  | 3              | 100.0                | 60.6    | 0.0                  | 9.9     | 30.0                | 18.7    |
| Business studies         | 4              | 100.0                | 75.2    | 850.0                | 14.7    | 40.0                | 25.2    |
| Chemistry                | 5              | 100.0                | 68.2    | 20.0                 | 12.3    | 28.0                | 22.1    |
| English/English language | 2              | 100.0                | 83.3    | 0.0                  | 14.7    | 25.0                | 27.7    |
| English literature       | 2              | 100.0                | 83.3    | 100.0                | 16.1    | 50.0                | 28.0    |
| French                   | 5              | 100.0                | 78.9    | 40.0                 | 19.3    | 42.0                | 28.0    |
| Design and technology    | 4              | 75.0                 | 68.1    | 25.0                 | 10.0    | 30.0                | 21.7    |
| General studies          | 78             | 88.5                 | 71.5    | 32.1                 | 15.0    | 36.5                | 24.3    |
| Geography                | 10             | 100.0                | 72.6    | 50.0                 | 17.1    | 44.0                | 25.0    |
| German                   | 2              | 100.0                | 80.7    | 0.0                  | 18.1    | 30.0                | 28.2    |
| History                  | 3              | 100.0                | 80.5    | 66.7                 | 17.5    | 43.3                | 27.7    |
| Information technology   | 4              | 100.0                | 64.9    | 25.0                 | 8.1     | 35.0                | 20.0    |
| Mathematics              | 8              | 87.5                 | 55.7    | 12.5                 | 11.9    | 30.0                | 18.6    |
| Music                    | 4              | 75.0                 | 77.0    | 0.0                  | 14.3    | 22.5                | 25.9    |
| Other sciences           | 6              | 83.3                 | 64.9    | 66.7                 | 12.5    | 41.7                | 21.3    |
| Physics                  | 5              | 100.0                | 62.0    | 80.0                 | 11.0    | 52.0                | 20.0    |
| Sociology                | 5              | 40.0                 | 70.0    | 20.0                 | 16.5    | 14.0                | 24.2    |
| Sports/PE studies        | 2              | 100.0                | 70.3    | 0.0                  | 9.0     | 35.0                | 21.2    |
| Vocational studies       | 13             | 92.3                 | 53.7    | 23.1                 | 8.4     | 33.8                | 17.0    |

### *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        | 12             | 100.0                | 97.4    | 80.0                 | 42.7    | 98.0                | 82.0    |
| Biology               | 18             | 94.4                 | 95.8    | 44.4                 | 36.1    | 83.3                | 76.0    |
| Business studies      | 47             | 100.0                | 98.7    | 27.7                 | 37.6    | 76.2                | 80.8    |
| Chemistry             | 19             | 94.7                 | 97.2    | 21.1                 | 47.5    | 78.9                | 83.9    |
| Communication studies | 25             | 100.0                | 99.0    | 76.0                 | 35.4    | 99.2                | 80.7    |

| Subject                  | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E |         | % gaining grades A-B |         | Average point score |         |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
|                          |                | School               | England | School               | England | School              | England |
| Drama                    | 5              | 100.0                | 99.3    | 80.0                 | 36.1    | 88.0                | 80.9    |
| Economics                | 3              | 100.0                | 98.7    | 33.3                 | 52.6    | 86.7                | 88.7    |
| English/English language | 4              | 100.0                | 99.2    | 0.0                  | 34.7    | 70.0                | 79.7    |
| English literature       | 27             | 100.0                | 99.4    | 66.7                 | 45.3    | 101.5               | 85.3    |
| French                   | 9              | 100.0                | 97.0    | 88.9                 | 53.3    | 104.4               | 88.6    |
| Design and technology    | 11             | 100.0                | 97.0    | 54.5                 | 29.0    | 98.2                | 73.8    |
| General studies          | 70             | 97.1                 | 94.2    | 31.4                 | 29.5    | 76.6                | 71.6    |
| Geography                | 10             | 100.0                | 98.5    | 70.0                 | 41.2    | 94.0                | 82.0    |
| German                   | 2              | 100.0                | 98.5    | 100.0                | 50.3    | 110.0               | 86.0    |
| History                  | 24             | 100.0                | 99.0    | 58.3                 | 42.4    | 93.3                | 83.3    |
| Information technology   | 25             | 100.0                | 95.7    | 60.0                 | 24.9    | 92.8                | 70.0    |
| Mathematics              | 61             | 96.7                 | 96.5    | 57.4                 | 55.5    | 91.8                | 88.7    |
| Music                    | 2              | 100.0                | 97.6    | 100.0                | 33.7    | 120.0               | 77.1    |
| Other languages          | 1              | 100.0                | 96.7    | 100.0                | 66.6    | 120.0               | 94.7    |
| Other sciences           | 36             | 100.0                | 96.4    | 58.3                 | 36.9    | 91.7                | 77.9    |
| Other social studies     | 5              | 100.0                | 96.6    | 60.0                 | 36.2    | 88.0                | 77.3    |
| Physics                  | 31             | 100.0                | 96.4    | 48.4                 | 43.8    | 86.5                | 81.5    |
| Religious studies        | 2              | 100.0                | 98.5    | 50.0                 | 45.0    | 90.0                | 84.7    |
| Sociology                | 12             | 100.0                | 98.1    | 41.7                 | 39.2    | 86.7                | 80.8    |
| Sports/PE studies        | 19             | 100.0                | 97.7    | 57.0                 | 24.8    | 86.3                | 71.6    |

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English literature and French, and German was sampled.

In German, results in 2004 were above the national average. On the basis of the lesson observed and the work seen, these results are likely to be maintained by a much larger group. In a lesson observed in Year 13, students worked independently on a challenging task on the environment, very well supported by their teacher. Students were very enthusiastic about the course, notably about their work experience opportunities in Germany.

### English literature

Provision in English literature is very good.

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

### **Main strengths**

- Teaching is very well focused on the needs of the students and the requirements of the examination
- Students appreciate the opportunity to take responsibility for aspects of their own learning
- Students joining the course from other schools are very well introduced to the requirements of the course

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

136. In 2004, results were well above the national average, continuing the rising trend that has now been apparent for three years.

#### **Standards and achievement**

137. The demanding nature of the written and oral tasks set for students leads to very good achievement. For example, students produce extended, well-written and tightly argued essays on the roles of the female characters in *Othello*. Such writing shows the students' ability to support a line of reasoning with well-selected evidence. Students also display a mature ability to discuss literature with authority and insight. For example, during the inspection, students were able to compare and contrast pairs of novels, such as *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* and *Catch 22* with a detailed understanding of theme, character and structure, as well as of broader social and cultural issues such as the treatment of war in the two novels.

#### **Teaching and learning**

138. In their lessons, teachers make explicit the requirements for the higher examination grades and help students to assess their own work in terms of those criteria. This improves the students' examination prospects by helping them to focus their work, by instilling a sense of confidence and by encouraging high aspirations. In a similar way, coursework is marked in considerable detail, with careful guidance for improvement in terms of examination grades. Students have the opportunity to select some of the material they study and they respond to this with maturity. They value the encouragement they receive to read widely as it helps them to understand the context of the literature on the syllabus. Students joining the school at 16 appreciate the guidance they receive on how to study at A-level and the way teachers provide them with any individual help they need. Students' understanding is deepened by the teachers' very good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm for the literature that they are teaching.

#### **Leadership and management**

139. The leadership of the subject has established a clear sense of direction, with appropriate priorities and very good organisation. There is a sense of drive and commitment amongst the teachers of English. Standards are well above average, whereas they were above average at the time of the last inspection. In the last three years, standards have been rising steadily. Improvement has thus been very good.

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

140. Across the range of subjects students display standards of literacy that are well above average. In many lessons, teachers ensure that students have ample opportunity to develop the skills of written and oral expression. In media studies, for example, attention is paid to the structure and format of investigative coursework and teachers' annotations of the work always refer to the standard of written English. In art, the standard of critical writing contributes well to the level of student achievement. In physical education, students' oral presentations are confident and articulate.

## French

Provision in French is very good.

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are well above average
- Students' language skills develop rapidly in response to very good teaching
- The curriculum is enriched by regular use of new technology to introduce authentic and up-to-date material
- Teachers work as a cohesive team and are highly committed to students
- Students do not have enough structured opportunities for contact with France

### Commentary

#### Examination results

141. Results, in 2004, were well above the national average, similar to those of 2003. A large proportion of students continue from AS to A2 level.

#### Standards and achievement

142. A Year 13 group was seen engaged in fluent discussion of maritime pollution. Year 12 students had progressed well beyond GCSE, tackling topics such as the Internet and the French education system with confidence. Students are enthusiastic and committed to the course and develop very good knowledge of grammar through focused study. Their skills in speaking and writing are particular strengths and examples of very well-developed listening skills were seen.

#### Teaching and learning

143. The very good teaching is based on high levels of subject expertise. Lessons are conducted in French. Teacher input is interspersed with supportive dialogue and consistent challenge. Lessons are very well prepared and resourced, with new technology effectively used to enrich content. The very well-planned curriculum provides students with a rich and engaging diet. A strong grammatical spine enables very good learning and progress. Students also learn very well through their own commitment and motivation. They have a very good capacity for independent work, an intrinsic interest in the course and they benefit from very good assessment and feedback which give them very clear guidelines as to how to improve. All are very clear as to their target grades. Based on class observation and discussion with students, their attitudes to French are excellent. They are highly focused and enthusiastic, enjoy the course and enjoy excellent rapport and relationships with teachers and each other.

#### Leadership and management

144. Leadership is highly committed, hard-working and provides a very good role model. The use of several teachers on the course provides variety for students. The department is very well organised, with very good induction of new staff at sixth form level. There have been good work experience initiatives in recent years and an attempt to revive these is underway. However, students would benefit from more structured contacts with France. Since the last inspection, a very successful department has maintained its overall high standards and the curriculum has been enriched with the impact of new technology.

## MATHEMATICS

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and the course in further mathematics was sampled.

Standards seen in the further mathematics lesson observed were well above average. Students achieved well because their very good attitudes enabled them to learn effectively from the expert subject knowledge of their teacher.

Provision in mathematics is good.

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject and examination knowledge, which supports good student progress during lessons
- Very good working relationships between teachers and students ensure that students learn effectively
- Homework tasks are insufficiently challenging for the highest-attaining students
- The number of students continuing from AS to A2 has been good but fell significantly in 2004

### Commentary

#### Examination results

145. Results, in 2004, were above the national average, as they have been consistently in recent years. The proportion of students continuing into Year 13, in 2004, was much lower than in recent years.

#### Standards and achievement

146. In the standards seen in lessons and in students' work, algebraic skills have improved since the last inspection. Students achieve well as the result of the combination of their very good attitudes to learning with very good teacher knowledge, both of the subject and examination demands. For example, in a very good Year 13 lesson, students worked diligently, developing their confidence steadily, so that they were able to convert equations from parametric to Cartesian form, tackling examination questions skilfully. Year 12 students are very confident in their use of statistical ideas, producing and interpreting statistical diagrams with above average competence.

#### Teaching and learning

147. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to introduce topics clearly, often making very effective use of data projectors. They select instructive examples, take care to be precise, ask well-targeted questions, and are able to give very good examination advice. Students engage well with the exercises they are set by teachers, making very good learning gains. For example, in a clearly taught lesson on linear regression, a cooperative group of students rapidly mastered the required concepts and calculations. Marking in the mock module examinations accurately identifies shortcomings, and gives helpful and constructive guidance on improvement. Teachers often require students to complete exercises started in class for homework, thus requiring less of the highest-attaining students who have already completed most of the work. Use of ICT by students to support their study of mathematics is limited.

#### Leadership and management

148. Substantial effort has been made to put in place schemes of work and resources to match the recent syllabus changes. Teachers have been provided with, and encouraged to use, a good range of ICT resources to enhance their teaching. Action has been taken to channel more students into

sixth form mathematics through the study of an extra free-standing mathematics qualification in Year 11. There are no standard assessment tasks in place so that there is no systematic monitoring of student progress except in the mock examinations at the end of each of the six modules. Lunchtime booster classes support those students whose achievement gives cause for concern. Policy documents lack requirements on the setting and marking of homework. Overall, good improvement has maintained the good provision identified in the last inspection.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

149. Sixth form students use their very good numeracy skills to support their learning in many other subject areas. In chemistry, students handle data, plot graphs and use formulae very effectively. In design and technology very good accuracy in measurement ensures successful outcomes in milling and jointwork. Physical education students use graphs and equations very competently and confidently, incorporating good use of ICT in their presentation. Geography students make substantial use of data and graphs, showing very good competence. In art, students show good understanding of perspective. Overall, competence in numeracy across the sixth form curriculum is well above average.

### **SCIENCE**

Chemistry was the focus subject in the inspection but biology and physics were also sampled.

Results in biology, in 2004, were well above average. In the lesson observed, students and teachers shared good relationships and worked together in a cooperative manner. Students were achieving well and attaining above average standards. The lesson was well planned with the teacher discussing recent assessment results on a one-to-one basis with students, giving a very clear indication of her expectations. Meanwhile the other students were fully engaged in group work preparing for a class presentation on the respiratory system. Results in physics, in 2004, were above average. In a satisfactory lesson, Year 13 students consolidated their understanding and practical skills, in a range of contexts, as they carried out different investigations.

### **Chemistry**

Provision in chemistry is satisfactory.

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teachers are very well qualified specialists with very good examination experience
- The relationships between students and teachers are very cooperative and supportive
- Teachers use a wide range of teaching and learning styles but are restricted in the use of computers

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

150. The results obtained by students in 2004 were in line with the national average having been above in 2003. Some students did not reach their predicted grades.

#### **Standards and achievement**

151. Students enter the sixth form with above average attainment from a range of schools, having followed either separate sciences or coordinated science at GCSE. Current standards in Year 13 reflect previous examination results rather than those of last year. The approach and understanding by Year 13 students to a practical session on rates of reaction were very good and they were able to



discuss the theoretical aspects accurately. Most students are reaching their predicted grades and making satisfactory progress. Students feel the transition into the sixth form was well handled and they settled in quickly.

### Teaching and learning

152. The lessons are well planned, have good pace and engage the students well. The attitudes of the students are good and they have the confidence to enter into the well-handled question and answer sessions. The effectiveness of some students' learning is diminished due to their reluctance to reinforce their learning outside the lessons. The teachers know the students well and have extensive data on targets and current attainment. Students enjoy the subject and feel very well supported by the teachers.

### Leadership and management

153. The team of three teachers has excellent subject knowledge and plan the course effectively in a cooperative manner. That a proportion of students did not achieve their predicted grades in 2004 has been identified as a major issue and extensive efforts have been made to identify the causes. All aspects of the teaching and learning, including syllabus choice, have been well evaluated. Students who are not reaching their predicted levels have been identified but the procedures to challenge and improve their commitment to learning are not being followed with sufficient rigour. An effective specialist technician supports the teachers very well. The accommodation is very good but there is difficulty in gaining ready access to computers in numbers sufficient for whole-group use. There was too little detail in the previous report to make a valid judgement on progress.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus of the inspection was the AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education) course in information and communication technology and the A-level computing course was sampled.

There are no national comparisons available for the computing course. In 2004, sixteen students entered the examination. All students passed and three-quarters gained grades A or B. Standards seen during the inspection reflect the examination grades. Students achieve well because of good teacher knowledge, clear explanations and a high level of interest.

### Information and communication technology

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

|                                    |                      |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
|                                    | Year 13              |
| Standards                          | Average              |
| Achievement                        | Good                 |
| Teaching and learning              | Good                 |
| Leadership                         | Good                 |
| Management                         | Good                 |
| Progress since the last inspection | This is a new course |

### Main strengths

- Good teaching results in students who are enthusiastic about their work and achieve well
- Good technician support means that learning is not interrupted by hardware problems
- Students are well supported by teachers who are secure in their subject and have good experience of the examinations

### Commentary

#### Examination results

154. This course will not be examined until summer 2005.

## **Standards and achievement**

155. Most students start this course with below average attainment in the subject. They achieve well and standards seen are in line with national expectations for this stage of the course. Students select areas of personal interest for many of the units covered. For instance, one student has created a spreadsheet to assist in stock control on a relative's farm. This is good as tackling real-life applications raises achievement and demands a good standard of work. Students, studying the impact of ICT on every day life, worked well in pairs as they searched the Internet for information to create Powerpoint presentations on issues such as the data protection act. Students achieved well in this lesson as they were interested in the topic and were given the opportunity to discuss their findings. In discussing the social impact of ICT the quality of debate was good, with students clearly identifying positive and negative effects.

## **Teaching and learning**

156. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understand the requirements of the curriculum and of the examination board. Clear explanation ensures that students work hard and industriously. Data-projectors are used to good effect in lessons with teachers being good role models as users of ICT. Teachers provide good individual tuition for students. This is successful because teachers know their students well and have a good working relationship with them. Learning is enhanced through the use of skilled technical support. This allows teachers to concentrate on delivering subject content and ensuring that good learning takes place. The attitudes of students in sixth form ICT lessons are good. They are enthusiastic about their work and keen to discuss the different applications.

## **Leadership and management**

157. Leadership and management importantly focus on enhancing the provision. The vocational course has been introduced well and is increasing in popularity. Staffing issues have been overcome without affecting standards or achievement. Leadership ensures that the teachers operate as a cohesive and mutually supportive team.

## **ICT across the curriculum**

158. Overall competence of students in the use of ICT is good. They use the Internet well in their research. In art, design packages are used to enhance and modify images. In design and technology ICT is used to very good effect. Students use word processing and presentation packages in several subjects, including English and modern foreign languages. In a Year 12 biology lesson students prepared Powerpoint slides for class presentations on the respiratory system. Teachers use laptops and data projectors in some subjects. Insufficient use is made of ICT in business studies and opportunities for its use are missed in geography.

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus of the inspection was geography with lessons in history and politics being sampled.

In history, results in 2004 were well above national averages, an improvement on the previous year. In the observed lesson, students were achieving very well as a result of very good teaching. Drawing on the subject expertise of the teacher, students exercised their critical faculties and reached relevant conclusions when considering different sources of information. Student files show that they are well supported by learning materials and have a clear understanding of examination requirements. The quality of assessment is very good.

In politics, the numbers are too small to make meaningful comparisons with national results. A very good lesson was observed where students demonstrated well-above average standards as they engaged with the implications of current news stories. All students participated with perceptive observations and questions. They had a very good grasp of British political history and could compare and contrast the leadership styles of prime ministers.

## Geography

Provision in geography is very good.

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCE results are significantly above average
- Very well structured lessons and responsive students ensure very good progress
- Some opportunities to use ICT and to give students more responsibility for their own learning are being missed
- Assessment of work is very good and provides clear targets for improvement

### Commentary

#### Examination results

159. In 2004, results were well above the national average as they were in 2003. Retention of students from AS to A2 course was disappointing this year but is usually good.

#### Standards and achievement

160. Most students have a good understanding of topics covered in both human and physical geography and make very good progress given their levels of attainment when starting the course. They are able to apply their knowledge of physical geography to ascertain the causes of natural hazards and to then analyse the effects on the environment. Their investigative skills are very well developed. They use a range of data very well and make good judgements using this data. Their map work and their ability to use photographic evidence are good. There was limited evidence of the use of computers in lessons although there is increasing encouragement for students to use ICT for research purposes. Fieldwork in Snowdonia was used very effectively to provide a focus for work of a very high standard on both tourism and glaciation.

#### Teaching and learning

161. Teaching is consistently good and sometimes very good. Lessons have a clear structure and resources are used effectively. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this very effectively in well directed question and answer sessions. Good support is provided for all students. They have opportunities to take responsibility for their work and to develop their investigative skills, although some opportunities in lessons are being missed, as are opportunities to use ICT. Students are attentive and work well in response to the good teaching, although there is very little planning to ensure that the highest-attaining students are being consistently challenged in lessons. In a very good lesson in Year 13 on the management of the consequences of an earthquake, the teaching was very well organised with a wide range of activities and resources provided. Very good question and answer sessions, and astute intervention by the class teacher as students worked in groups, ensured that very good progress was made. Work is regularly marked and the resulting information is used well to set targets related to examination levels and to help students improve their work. There are good opportunities for students to practice examination questions, and their progress is very effectively monitored by the department.

#### Leadership and management

162. The course is well organised with a good range of resources available. Day-to-day management is very good but there is no specific development plan for sixth form geography.

## ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on design and technology with electronics being sampled.

There are no national comparisons available for electronics. Results, in 2004, were better than in the previous year. In a very good lesson students, using a sophisticated software programme to design and test electronic circuits for their chosen project, achieved very well. They were supported, challenged and encouraged very well, on an individual basis, by their teacher.

### Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is very good.

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers demonstrate expertise in their subject which they share successfully with students to support their learning
- The commitment of the students and their resulting hard work contributes to their achievement
- Assessment is used very effectively to support and extend learning
- Limited specialist equipment and facilities for working with acrylics restricts the scope of practical work

### Commentary

#### Examination results

163. Results, in 2004, were well above the national average and an improvement from the previous year, particularly at the higher grades.

#### Standards and achievement

164. A minority of students begin the course with no previous experience in the subject. Year 12 students use ICT extensively to research, plan designs and improve presentation. By Year 13, students gain an extensive range of skills and knowledge to produce high quality coursework. They select ideas for design and making which make the most of their strengths and interests. They work with considerable commitment. Students have very good independent learning skills, working well both individually and collaboratively. They approach their project work with creative confidence, undertaking a wide range of research in designing their products. Higher-attaining students, from their wide research, generate an impressive range of ideas which, coupled with very good analytical and evaluation skills, enhance the quality of their work. Students achieve very well from their range of prior knowledge.

#### Teaching and learning

165. Coursework is well structured. Teachers are very knowledgeable in the subject and use their own skills well to extend the students' learning. Good relationships enable teachers to support individuals very well and this leads to very effective learning. Teachers set high expectations to which the students respond. Students work in wood and metal to develop a very high level of skill. They work with considerable accuracy and care to achieve products of a high quality finish. The opportunities for Year 13 students to undertake computer-aided design work (CAD) are insufficient. The scope of students' work is limited by the poor CAD-CAM and acrylics facilities. Assessment is used very well. Marking is thorough and regular and is used to set individual student's targets. Teachers give practical advice on the work in hand and assess completed work constructively.

## Leadership and management

166. Teamwork is very good with a shared vision for post 16 courses. Teachers have a strong commitment to the students and this is appreciated by them. There are effective links with neighbouring schools which supports the teaching of the subject. Very good links with higher education contribute positively to the development of the subject. Developments have taken place since the last inspection, and much of the good practice has been retained.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was art and design, and media studies. Theatre studies was sampled.

Results in theatre studies, in 2004, were above the national average. In the lesson observed, standards were well above average. Genuine independent learning was clearly evident and students were enthusiastically engaged in preparatory work for a performance piece. They demonstrated the capacity to evaluate work in progress in constructive ways in order to inform their own improvement targets.

### Art and Design

Provision in art and design is good.

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

### Main strengths

- A popular subject with increasing numbers choosing to follow the course
- Standards of written work demonstrate very high levels of critical analysis
- There are good systems in place to monitor and track students' achievement
- There are constructive links with local employers and higher educational centres

### Commentary

#### Examination results

167. In recent years the numbers following the course have been small. Results, in 2004, were well above the national average. They were similar, in 2003, for a smaller number of candidates.

#### Standards and achievement

168. Numbers choosing to study art and design have increased and groups include a small number of students who have come from local 11 to 16 schools. Most attained above average results in art and design prior to joining the sixth form. In the current Year 12 there are, however, more students with limited experiences and prior attainment in the subject than in previous years. Whilst some are struggling most are making good progress. In both Year 12 and 13, levels of literacy are high and so students read and research at length and provide well-argued reasons for their decision-making. Where students use these skills in conjunction with first hand experiences, for example by visiting studios, galleries and museums or they draw from life, then standards are significantly higher than where there is an over-reliance on secondary sources. In Year 13, the quality of critical analysis is very high. The highest-attaining students, by drawing on their wider knowledge of philosophy or social and political contexts, demonstrate very high levels of academic research that informs their work and thinking.

#### Teaching and learning

169. Much of the teaching seen was very good. Teachers have a good understanding of course requirements and their use of the marking criteria gives students constructive feedback about their work and progress. Dialogue was most effective where students were challenged and where

teachers teased out from students a range of alternative explanations and solutions rather than accepting, without too much question, their initial responses. As a result students tended to be more alert to, and sympathetic towards, different interpretations of their own and others' work. In the lessons seen, teaching and learning were almost exclusively through one-to-one tutorials. While this worked effectively in most cases, opportunities were missed for students to share experiences and learn from one another. There was informal discussion between some class members but a small number of students worked in isolation. Teachers keep up-to-date records of students' work rate, attendance and on-going assessments. These records, together with formal and informal discussions and dialogue provide the basis for the effective monitoring of students' progress.

### Leadership and management

170. Standards have been maintained and achievement has improved. There are good links with higher education centres and local industries. The chance to work in a design studio, and to explore at first hand the opportunities for further study and employment, has been very beneficial for some students. In the past, some students have been accepted directly onto degree courses and by-passed foundation courses. Teachers provide good quality advice and guidance and prepare students well for the next stage of their education or employment.

### Media Studies

Provision in media studies is very good.

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' marking and assessment of students' work are excellent although opportunities for students to review their own learning are currently under-developed
- Course planning and organisation are very good
- Teachers effectively share their expertise and enthusiasm leading to very good relationships
- Positive attitudes and regular opportunities for independent learning lead to students' personal and academic development as the course progresses

### Commentary

#### Examination results

171. Results, in 2004, were well above average and maintain the pattern developed from the time of the previous inspection.

#### Standards and achievement

172. Students begin the course with GCSE results significantly above the national average but the majority have little, if any, experience of media studies. Between one-third and half of the cohort are new to the school in Year 12. Most are attaining grades A or B for coursework, demonstrating very good rates of progress. Year 12 students produce a text comprising articles for the 'Media Bus', the school newspaper. An accompanying analysis and evaluation compares their methods and achievements with professional practice. In small group and class discussions, Year 12 students demonstrated a sensitive appreciation of the representation of race through images depicted by television and a range of photographs. Independent learning is also developed through completing investigative research in Year 13, analysing film, television or print-based media.

## Teaching and learning

173. The well-planned course successfully combines theoretical components with practical skills, enabling students to apply aspects of production to the concepts acquired. For example, they are successfully taught to recognise how the impact of a magazine front cover is created and then supported in applying the techniques to their own work. Teachers' very good level of current subject knowledge and understanding supports students' learning, for instance in how to interpret statistics in a newspaper article illustrating the impact of digital television on changes to audience viewing patterns. Students are very well motivated and contribute readily to discussions. Good use of seminar-based teaching and learning was seen when Year 13 students presented critiques of media developments such as a new 'real life' magazine aimed at a female audience. These presentations were followed by purposeful class discussions. Lessons are carefully structured and teachers use a wide range of questions and activities to develop independent learning. Teachers provide excellent guidance during both planning and completion of coursework. Constructive and thorough comments on assignments detail strengths and areas for improvement to support students' learning. Plans to involve students in evaluating their own learning targets have not been fully developed.

## Leadership and management

174. Self-evaluation focuses on standards and accurately reviews strengths and areas for improvement. These processes inform the development plan which appropriately reflects subject and school improvement priorities. Effective monitoring of teaching and learning occurs to inform best practice. Very good documentation provides the strong teaching team with a clear planning framework to support successful teaching. The wide range of stimulating resource material enables students to develop their knowledge, understanding and key learning skills during lessons and independent study. Increased student numbers and the significant proportion of higher grades demonstrate improvement since the last inspection. ICT is now used more effectively, leading to more varied teaching methods and allowing greater variety in learning styles. Very good accommodation, including seminar rooms and specialist facilities for audio and video editing, support students' learning well.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on physical education. Students have additional opportunities in the sixth form to experience sport through organised games.

### Physical Education

Provision in physical education is very good.

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

### Main strengths

- Results, in 2004, were well above the national average
- The quality of teaching leads to the very good achievement in lessons
- The leadership provides a purposeful focus, ethos and direction for the subject
- The very positive attitudes of students results in a very positive learning atmosphere in lessons

## **Commentary**

### **Examination results**

175. Results, in 2004, were well above the national average. Over the last three years there has been a consistent 100 per cent pass rate with the proportion of students gaining the higher grades improving year on year.

### **Standards and achievement**

176. In Year 13, students achieve very well, building further on their achievements in Year 12. Interesting lessons and enthusiastic teaching have ensured students have a good grasp of, for example, contemporary sport in France. Students are enthusiastic about the subject and have a strong awareness of current issues and controversies in sport. Some individuals have achieved representative honours in their particular sports at district, regional and national levels.

### **Teaching and learning**

177. Learning outcomes are shared with students and there are lively starter activities. Students are therefore aware of what is expected and are immediately engaged. Teachers have a very good command of the units of work being taught and are enthusiastic in their approach, which motivates students very well in their learning. Lessons are very well planned and structured, with pace, progression and challenge. In theory lessons in both Years 12 and 13, a variety of activities involved students in individual, pair and small group activities. Students were learning well because they were thoroughly involved and evaluating their own gaps in knowledge and strengths and weaknesses in performance. Students are encouraged to undertake individual research and use the Internet to do so. Very effective use is made of ICT in the presentation of their coursework. Students appreciate the very good quality marking of their work which makes clear to them what they need to do to improve. Students' attitudes to learning are very positive and they comment very favourably on the quality of support and guidance teachers provide for them throughout the course. Homework is consistently set and extends students' learning.

### **Leadership and management**

178. Since the previous inspection the course has become well established, more popular and results have improved. Enrichment opportunities through physical education remain strong and large numbers of students continue to take advantage of this provision.

## **BUSINESS**

The school offers A-level courses in both business studies and economics. Students taking business studies have the opportunity to take an AS-level in accounts as an extension to their studies. The focus of the inspection was on business studies and economics and accounts were sampled.

In 2004, the economics group was too small to make meaningful comparisons with national results but everyone passed. In the lesson observed, standards were above the national average and all students made good progress due to the high level of intellectual challenge. Learning became particularly relevant and interesting when students had opportunities to apply theory to the real world such as the case study of the proposed merger between a satellite broadcaster and Premiership football club.

In accounts there are no national comparisons, but in 2004 nearly all students passed and one-third did so at grades A or B. In the lesson observed, students achieved well because confident teaching built up students' understanding of accounting methods in a clear and systematic way and was quickly related to examination questions.



## Business Studies

Overall, the quality of provision in advanced level business studies is good.

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress in relation to their abilities
- The popularity of the subject results in good resources
- Teaching often builds well on the subject's real world context but sometimes can be too theoretical and teacher dominated
- There is too much inconsistency in the quality of provision for different classes

### Commentary

#### Results

179. Results, in 2004, were in line with the national average and a little lower than in 2003.

#### Standards and achievement

180. The vast majority of students begin the subject with no previous experience of business studies and make good progress so that by Year 13 standards are above average. All students can apply motivational theory to the human resource practices of businesses such as a well known car manufacturer, and those who had the opportunity to visit the factory were able to make very good connections between theory and practice. Students are able to use economic terminology such as *inferior goods* to explain why demand for the products of some shops may increase when people have less money to spend. The quantity of paper in students' files sometimes predominates over their understanding.

#### Teaching and learning

181. Where teaching was most successful students were engaged by theory being clearly linked to their experience. For example, in a lesson on motivational theories students were asked why they did their part time jobs. Whilst money was a very popular motivation, other factors included such things as opportunities to socialise or work with animals. Students were then given a chart of important motivating factors and listed these in order of importance, along with the teacher. This prepared students very well to understand the motivational theorists such as Taylor and McGregor. Where learning was less successful, teaching was less relevant to the experiences of students. Marking of students' work is inconsistent and does not give enough advice on improvement. Overall, the good subject knowledge of teachers and the positive attitudes of students lead to good achievement, but students' experiences are too variable. Visits and use of real world contexts are welcome but their accessibility is inconsistent. There is some use of computers, but students do not have enough opportunities to develop as independent learners. In interviews, students are positive about the subject but confirm the picture of inconsistency both in teaching styles and marking.

#### Leadership and management

182. The subject is popular, successful and well established, with good resources and accommodation. There is a good match of specialist staff to the curriculum, but timetabling of part-time staff militates against effective communication and team work. This leads to a lack of consistency. Less experienced staff are inducted well to become effective teachers. There are good retention rates between Years 12 and 13 and many students go on to take a related subject at university. The subject has been introduced since the last inspection and has been successfully established with a history of good achievement.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

Results in general studies, in 2004, were above average. In a good lesson Year 13 students worked well, in small groups and as a class, as they discussed, developed and shared ideas on the influences that had shaped their opinions. They developed their understanding through their involvement in a well-planned task, and achieved well as they were effectively encouraged and engaged by their teacher.

In religious education a very small number of students took an A level examination in 2004 and so it is not possible to make national comparisons, but all the students passed. All students follow a course in the sixth form that includes elements of religious education and meets the legal requirements. In the lesson observed, students achieved very well because of very good teaching, and standards were above average. Very wide ranging and well thought-out discussion, led by a visitor from Rugby *Youth for Christ*, ensured that good and varied opinions and differing values were debated very well. Students' knowledge of moral and ethical issues were tested and developed further.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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