

# INSPECTION REPORT

**MATTHEW ARNOLD SCHOOL**

Oxford

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123258

Headteacher: Mr A Percival

Lead inspector: R C Drew

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> October 2004

Inspection number: 268853

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	982
School address:	Arnolds Way Oxford Oxfordshire
Postcode:	OX2 9JE
Telephone number:	(01865) 862 232
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Ford
Date of previous inspection:	April 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is an average-sized 11 to 18 comprehensive school with 982 pupils on roll, including 142 sixth-form students. Specialist science college status was acquired in 2002. It is increasingly oversubscribed and serves the western suburbs of Oxford, where pupils' social and economic background is strongly advantaged by national standards. Five per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, a third of the national proportion. About 88 per cent of pupils are ethnically white British, with three per cent of Asian/British or Asian/Pakistani background; very low numbers come from ten other ethnic minority groups. Five per cent of pupils do not have English as their mother tongue. About 13 per cent of pupils have special educational needs, just below the national figure, most of these having dyslexia and a few social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Prior attainment is above average. There are strong links with a school in difficult circumstance in another part of the local education authority. Recent awards include Schools Achievement (2002), Investors in people (2001) and Healthy Schools (2002). The school is active in several educational initiatives, especially the Duke of Edinburgh, Young Enterprise and Engineering Education schemes.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7281	Robert Drew	Lead inspector	
2545	Elizabeth Burgess	Lay inspector	
18477	Ronald Cohen	Team inspector	History
	Peter Lawley	Team inspector	English
11975	Thelma McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music Drama
19404	Les Schubeler	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
	Barry Smith	Team inspector	Geography
30899	Kenneth Boden	Team inspector	Design and technology
21785	Veronica Kerr	Team inspector	Science
31680	Phil Redican	Team inspector	Art and design
31100	Geoffrey Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics
31963	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Special educational needs
12972	Anthony Weaden	Team inspector	Physical education
	Anthony Fiddian-Green	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship English as an additional language

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This school is already good and it continues to improve strongly. There are very effective and occasionally excellent features and important aspects requiring improvement. The budget only allows average spending per pupil, yet standards are well above average by the end of compulsory schooling. Teaching and learning are good and pupils make good progress in lessons and achieve very well long term. Leadership and management are very effective in setting and meeting high expectations. The school therefore offers very good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are above average at the end of Years 9 and 13 and well above in Year 11, with very good overall added value.
- The headteacher provides excellent vision, drive and expectations and overall, the school has very good leadership and management. There have been very marked improvements in most areas as a result.
- Provision in art and design and English is very effective across the school.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and behave well.
- Teaching and learning, assessment and target setting are good, with much that is very good, especially in the sixth form.
- There are very good links with other schools and with parents.
- Too little improvement since the last inspection in ICT, music and design and technology.
- Recent results for AS overall and at GCSE in design and technology and ICT have been below average.
- Areas of poor accommodation hinder the school's progress.

There has been very good improvement in effectiveness since the previous inspection of 1999. The current headteacher has led a very successful assault on the weaknesses then exposed and GCSE standards are radically improved. Post-16 results in 2004, as yet unconfirmed, indicate well above average standards in a much-expanded sixth form. Progress, only satisfactory in 1999, is now very good, and behaviour is much more positive. The number on roll has increased and facilities are far better. Teaching and learning have improved from barely satisfactory to good, with much that is very good.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

**Achievement overall is very good.** Pupils enter with above-average attainment and build well on this in Years 7 to 9 and very effectively in Years 10 and 11. Standards seen by inspectors and results in national test in English, mathematics and science are above the average for all schools and well above those for similar schools. At the end of Year 11, recent GCSE results have been above the average for all schools; compared with similar schools and in the work seen by inspectors, standards are now well above average. A decline in sixth-form results is being reversed and here achievement is now good. Standards seen were above average, matched by the recent Year 13 A2 results. Throughout the school, art and design and English are particularly successful, with standards and added value well above average. Across Years 7 to 9, however, standards are

below average in music and in Years 7 to 11, pupils make too little overall progress in ICT and design and technology.

**Pupils show positive attitudes and behave well.** The school has succeeded in improving this aspect, providing good moral and social guidance. Pupils are proud of their school and attendance is now very good

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**Teaching and learning are good.** The vast majority of lessons have satisfactory or better teaching and in nearly two-thirds the quality is at least good, with some instances of excellent teaching and learning. Both are consistently very good in art and design and English across the school, and in geography and drama in the sixth form. They are unsatisfactory in music in Years 7 to 9 and only satisfactory in several other subjects across the main school. Nevertheless, teaching is much more effective than at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers are authoritative, good motivators and use assessment consistently well to set expectations and maximise progress. **The curriculum is satisfactory** with strong features, such as the additional programmes for all of Year 10 and some pupils in Year 11, but the formal curriculum for these years has less variety and breadth than is common in similar schools. It meets most statutory requirements apart from aspects of physical education. In the sixth form, there is an appropriate range of academic courses, but statutory religious education requirements are not met. **Care, guidance and support are good, and partnerships with parents, the school and the community are very good.**

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good.** Improvement has been very marked because the headteacher's sense of purpose and direction are excellent and well supported by other key staff. Management is very good overall. Most departments and year groups are well led and managed. In English, art and design, mathematics, science and geography and in the sixth form, the quality is very good, but it is unsatisfactory in music. The governing body are very effective: their knowledge of the school and their support and strategic guidance are much better than average. Governors meet almost all their statutory duties, but not those for physical education in Years 7 to 9, the act of worship and sixth form religious education.

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

Parents strongly support the school and it is now heavily oversubscribed. Those attending the meeting and responding to the inspection questionnaire expressed very positive views about most aspects of the school's work. Over 95 per cent of pupils and sixth-form students said they enjoyed being at the school. They were particularly pleased with the high expectations of teachers.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- ensure satisfactory provision in ICT by providing good access and teaching for all pupils;
- raise the quality of management in music and teaching in Years 7 to 9;
- consolidate the measures to raise standards in GCSE design and technology and ICT;
- prevent poor collective AS results in future years through the improved guidance, support and monitoring arrangements currently being introduced;
- take steps to ensure suitable music accommodation, to upgrade of several badly maintained classrooms and outdoor areas and complete the agreed building programmes;

**and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- provide a full programme of study for physical education in Years 7 to 11;

- provide adequate religious education in the sixth form; and
- provide a daily act of collective worship.

### THE SIXTH FORM AT MATTHEW ARNOLD SCHOOL

The sixth form has 142 students and is expanding. Virtually all transfer from Year 11 of the main school. It offers a good range of AS and A2 courses.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good** and its cost-effectiveness is very good. On a budget that permits only average spending, students receive very good teaching, make good progress and reach above-average and improving standards. The sixth form is very well led and managed.

#### The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Added value in results at the end of Year 13 and achievement are now good. A2 results rose strongly in 2004 and are well above validated national averages.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Standards are well above average in English literature and art and design and the students' progress in these subjects and in drama is very good.
- Recent AS results have been weak with far too many unclassified grades; A2 results, while improved, are variable, with too little added value in some subjects.
- Sixth-form leadership and management and monitoring of students' progress are very good.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is too limited.
- Arrangements for general studies teaching are unsatisfactory and those for religious education fail to meet statutory requirements.
- There is a good ethos and students show very positive attitudes.

### 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>Provision in English literature is very good.</b> Teaching and learning are very effective. Leadership and management are very good. Standards are well above average.
Mathematics	<b>Provision is good.</b> Teaching and learning are good and the course well led and managed. Standards are above average in Year 13.
Science	<b>Provision in physics is very good.</b> Achievement and teaching and learning are good; standards are average. The subject is very well led. <b>Provision in biology is good.</b> Standards are average, indicating good progress in relation to prior attainment. Teaching and learning are good and leadership is very good.
Humanities	<b>Provision in geography is good.</b> Recent results have been average, and value-added has been satisfactory. However, current teaching is very good and students are achieving very well in lessons.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Provision in design and technology is satisfactory.</b> Teaching and learning are good, students make sound progress. They are adjusting well to the demands of the A2 work. Standards in lessons match national ones; there are no A2 results on this new course.



Visual and performing arts and media	<p><b>Provision in art and design is very good.</b> Results are consistently well above average because teaching and leadership of the subject are very effective. Students make <b>very good progress</b>.</p> <p><b>Provision in drama is very good.</b> Because teaching and learning are very effective students make very good achievement. Recent A2 results were well above average. Current standards are broadly average.</p>
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<p><b>Provision in physical education is good.</b> Recent results and work seen in lessons are both above average. This reflects good teaching within a well-led department.</p>

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*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**

**The advice, guidance and support provided for students are very good.** Tutors and the head of sixth form know their students well, involve parents effectively and provide very good advice. Monitoring of personal and academic progress is very effective and there is good careers advice.

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

**Very good**, contributing significantly to students' good progress because clear and demanding expectations are set. The head of sixth form and his immediate predecessor have successfully communicated these expectations so that students now show very positive attitudes in lessons, work well unsupervised and take responsibility for organising their progress. Current arrangements for assessment, target-setting and reviewing progress are very good and are part of an impressive development plan for raising standards further; all the steps taken so far have been effective.

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

Students express a very high overall level of satisfaction: over 95 per cent said they enjoy being in the sixth form. Issues, which appeared to be concerns in the questionnaire were countered by the positive views of students interviewed and the great weight of observations made by inspectors, confirming very positive relationships between staff and students, advice and guidance easily sought and career intentions successfully met. Inspectors agree with students that the range of activities outside lessons is far less than pupils in Years 7 to 11 enjoy.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement by the end of Year 11 is very good. Standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11. Cumulative gains in knowledge and skills are very marked. Progress is strongest in Years 10 and 11. Girls out perform boys but less so than nationally. Sixth-form standards are above average and students achieve well.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement, or value-added, at GCSE is very good.
- There is good achievement across Years 7 to 9.
- Trends in results are upwards, especially at GCSE and in the sixth form.
- Pupils in the main school make particularly good progress in English, art and design and science,
- In the sixth form, standards are well above average and achievement very good in English literature, art and design and drama,
- AS results have been weak in recent years, with too many unclassified grades.
- Standards in recent GCSE examinations have been too low in design and technology and ICT.
- Currently, achievement is unsatisfactory in design and technology in the main school and in music in Years 7 to 9.
- Girls reach higher standards than boys but the school has helped boys to narrow the gap.

#### Commentary

1. Teaching and assessment help pupils across the school, but the gains made by the end of Year 11 are particularly good. GCSE results are significantly higher than national averages. The pupils producing these results have above-average attainment on entry to the school, but are well above average by the end of Year 11. They build well on their prior attainment across Years 7 to 9 and do so with increasing effectiveness in Years 10 and 11. Cumulatively, their achievement is very good. This pattern matches that of sound teaching and good tracking of pupils' progress in the first few years and then predominantly good teaching and good support and monitoring in Years 10 and 11.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.7 (35.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	37.4 (38.2)	35.4 (34.7)
science	35.2 (36.5)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 170 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. The trends in examination results at GCSE have been strongly upward. For instance, the percentage of those achieving five or more GCSEs with grades of A\* to C has risen from 42 at the time of the last inspection, just below the national average, to 63 per cent in 2003, when the national figure was 52 per cent. In the sixth form, the recent decline in A2 performance has been halted with the 2004 results and the present standards indicate a marked improvement. These successful overall standards and trends reflect the central priority given by the headteacher to raising attainment. They are one indication of his very strong leadership and the positive response to it from teaching staff.

3. The achievement in English, art and design and science across Years 7 to 11 is very good and exceeds that of most other subjects. Their success is closely linked to the quality of teaching, which is particularly challenging and engaging and to the leadership and management of these departments that ensure good progression through increasingly demanding work and very careful monitoring.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	63 (59)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (93)	91(91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	38.6 (37)	38.7 (34.7)

*There were 135 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. GCSE standards have the potential to be far higher, which remains the school's objective. Results in some subjects have been or remain too low. In 2004, in design and technology and in ICT, a large proportion of candidates underperformed. In geography, boys' results were well below expectations. The school is taking steps to rectify these problems. Currently, however, achievement is unsatisfactory in design and technology in the main school. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 and 10 and 11 have studied during a period of discontinuity in teaching and leadership, and their lack of progress reflects this legacy. The new and effective leadership of the department is starting to counter this effect. In Years 7 to 9, achievement in music is unsatisfactory because teaching is insufficiently effective: pupils are working to levels of challenge and with classroom strategies that are less demanding than seen in most other subjects and make too little progress.
5. Girls' attainment in the main school is higher than boys'. However, the school is now using assessment well enough to motivate boys effectively, through identifying realistic targets for them and support their progress well. Largely as a result of this, the performance gap is narrower than nationally. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Their capabilities are identified on entry to the school and appropriate and informative individual educational plans (IEPs) are written. The co-ordinator and the learning support assistants are successful in ensuring that these pupils make good progress towards the individual targets set out in their IEPs. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well. There is an effective policy in place, which is well used across the school as a whole.

**Sixth form**

6. Achievement in the sixth form is currently good. Year 13 results from 2000 to 2003 indicated broadly satisfactory value-added, but those for 2004 are much higher and the implied improvement is confirmed by work seen during the inspection. Standards are now above average, with good progress evident on a day-to-day basis.

**Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003**

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	87.3 (88.2)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	28.3 (25.2)	32.6 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	258.2 (270.2)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 55 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

7. In some subjects, standards at the end of Year 13 are well above average because of very effective teaching and highly effective management of courses. In English literature, art and design and drama, teachers have established an ethos for study that encourages students to give of their very best. Teaching is not only stimulating and authoritative on a daily basis, but work is made progressively more demanding as the course unfolds. Crucial assessed items are anticipated and prepared for meticulously. As a result, the requirements of the examination boards for high-quality performance are well within the grasp of students when they are formally assessed. In other subjects, in geography, for example, similar conditions are being created.
8. Gifted and talented students achieve well in most subject areas and very well in some. In English, for example, there is a record of students performing amongst the best in the country at A-level. In art and design, students produce very good and individual work because of the high quality of individual guidance they are given by their teachers.
9. AS results at the end of Year 12 have had too many unclassified grades in the last two years. A significant number of students have followed courses from which they have gained far too little benefit. The school has recognised this failing and put a wide range of strategies in place to improve matters. Already the benefits of these actions are evident in lessons, tutorials and in the very positive, workman-like attitudes of students. Students are increasingly well monitored by their teachers and by sixth-form tutors. The head of sixth form provides another level of support and monitoring, applied very systematically and helpfully. The conditions that permitted uncorrected loss of progress in the past have been largely eliminated.

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

Pupils' attendance is very good in the main school and good in the sixth form. Punctuality is satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. Pupils' attitudes to school are good, as is their behaviour, demonstrated by the low incidence of exclusions. Attitudes and behaviour are very good in the sixth form. Personal development is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There have been very good improvements in attitudes and behaviour since the last inspection.
- The moral and social development of pupils is good.
- Relationships are very good and there is some good, collaborative learning.
- Tutor periods do not consistently promote spiritual development.
- Sixth-form students take responsibility well within the school community.
- There are still too many pupils who seek to disrupt lessons and misbehave at other times.
- Pupils and students are keen to be involved, but the opportunities for extra-curricular and cultural experience are limited in some areas.

### **Commentary**

10. Since the last inspection, many very effective strategies have been introduced to achieve good behaviour. There are clear expectations for behaviour in the classroom and around the school, and strategies to help those with particular problems, including very good use of the behaviour support unit. There is a consistent approach to rewards and sanctions are applied fairly. Exclusions are used appropriately and are at a reasonable level for a school of this size. Good attention is paid to promoting pupils' moral and social development through pastoral support and the programme of personal, social and health education. As a result, behaviour and attitudes towards school and learning are now positive, with pupils attending well and most taking a keen interest in lessons and the extra-curricular opportunities provided. However, there remain a significant few whose attitude gives cause for concern and who disrupt lessons with chatter and poor behaviour. This was particularly evident during the inspection in some lessons in Years 9 and 11, with both boys and girls displaying some unacceptable attitudes.

11. The majority of pupils are keen to achieve and play their part well in the school community. Very good relationships between pupils and teachers are a feature of the most effective lessons and tutor periods. Whilst significant improvements have been made to promote spiritual development, neither tutor periods nor assemblies provide consistent opportunities for reflection and the school fails to meet its statutory duty to provide daily acts of collective worship. Some pupils said they felt that the “thought for the day” provided some good opportunities to think about things, and some good discussions were heard on themes linked to “Saying Sorry”. However, the introduction of the daily thought is sometimes very perfunctory and the themes for the day and the week do not link into the programme for personal education, so that pupils find it hard to develop thoughtful and reflective responses to different human situations.
12. Religious education, art and design, drama, history and English all make positive contributions to both spiritual and cultural development, and when the opportunities are given pupils respond well, for example, in discussing the persecution of the Jews in Hitler’s Germany some excellent empathetic learning emerged, and in English, pupils showed a good understanding of the nature of apartheid through the study of a poem. Pupils participate well in activities such as the World Challenge event to learn about and help others; many become involved in charity work and raise funds or collect articles, for example, for the Christmas shoebox appeal or to help a school in Ghana. Insufficient use of visits is made to further cultural understanding and opportunities are missed to explore the cultural heritage of Oxford or to visit places of worship, museums or exhibition of art. Both pupils and parents expressed regret that such first-hand experiences are limited.

**Sixth form**

13. Attitudes and behaviour in the sixth form are consistently very good. The head of sixth form and other members of the teaching staff maintain the high standard of relationships seen in the main school. Students are treated with an appropriate level of mature respect, which is reciprocated well. Even so, there are occasions when students display passive attitudes in lessons and learning suffers.
14. In general, students display a willingness to be enterprising, to take responsibility and play a full part in the school community. They happily support younger pupils in their tutor groups, with paired reading and help with classes in many subjects. Senior prefects lead an effective school council.

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

Authorised absence	
School data	5.3
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	1.2

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

**Ethnic background of pupils****Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	754	38	1
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	15	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	5	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	6	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	11	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	24	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	24	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	3	1
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Chinese	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	9	0	0

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The overall **quality of education** is good. Teaching and learning are good and in some subjects and year groups very good. Curricular provision is satisfactory.

**Teaching and learning**

**The quality of teaching and learning for the school as a whole is good.** It is good across Years 7 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. Teachers use assessment well. Several subjects ensure very good teaching as the norm.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are good, with much that is very good.
- Sixth-form teaching and learning are very good.
- English and art and design provide consistently very good teaching across the school.
- In the sixth form, teaching and learning are very good in English literature, art and design, geography and drama.
- The use of assessment to gauge pupils' needs and shape teaching is good, with some very good practice.
- Teaching and learning are occasionally unsatisfactory, this weaker practice being confined to Years 7 to 9.
- Music teaching in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory.

- Teachers give good support to pupils with special educational needs and those deemed gifted and talented, but provision for pupils with English as an additional language is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

15. The quality of teaching and learning across the main school is good, but the strongest teaching is in Years 10 and 11. The proportion of good or better teaching here was about 65 per cent, and no unsatisfactory teaching or learning was seen. This reflects well on features general to the school, including the calibre of staff being appointed, the professional commitment of teachers and the monitoring and support from colleagues. Levels of subject expertise are generally very good and staff are able to involve their pupils effectively, including those who require skilful management of their behaviour. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 also benefit from the modified curriculum: specific options for some pupils liable to disaffection to enable them to improve both their commitment and the learning process of other pupils. In addition, the continuous upgrading of assessment and tracking systems has been trialled in Years 10 and 11 and they now give great assistance to teachers as they plan and monitor.
16. Because of very good leadership and management, which now have some momentum behind them, teaching quality in English and art and design are consistently very good across the school. New staff assimilate and strengthen the existing commitment to very high standards. The consensus amongst colleagues to seek constant improvement in their own performance is evident. The skills of individual teachers in many subjects, particularly strong in English and art and design, contribute to successful learning.
17. A crucial element in whole-school improvement has been the implementation of new assessment policies. Data is handled very well by many teachers and the overall position is good. Assessment is now used across the school to gauge pupils' needs, set them targets that they understand but which stretch them, and to give them regular, constructive feedback to help them to improve. The school is constantly seeking to refine its procedures and pupils show a better knowledge of their own progress than is generally seen.
18. Within this generally strong picture there are instances of unsatisfactory teaching and learning or lessons where both had the potential to be more effective. The small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching occurred in a range of subjects and generally arose from weak management of challenging behaviour and in groups with lower-attaining pupils. The lesson structure and pace in these circumstances, and the limited presence of support staff, made it hard to involve and motivate pupils. When problems arose, the school's agreed procedures for rewards and sanctions were not always followed. In music lessons in Years 7 to 9, some of these features are present and are sufficiently persistent for this aspect to be unsatisfactory. The leadership and management of the subject have improved provision, but have not yet established as standard, lessons that consistently have a wide range of strategies for actively involving younger pupils of all levels of attainment.
19. Teachers generally know and understand how to support the needs of pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented. Individual education plans are good. They clearly set out ways in which the curriculum can be adapted to meet individual needs. Most teachers make good use of the information they contain when planning lessons. A number of courses have been set up to offer pupils with special educational needs alternative provision to the mainstream. In these, teaching and learning are good because the work is very well matched to individual needs. Classroom management is good. The clear aims and objectives of the courses are shared with pupils. Whilst the number of pupils at an early stage of acquiring English is few, some receive no support in lessons when they clearly need it.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 139 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (1.5%)	33 (23.7%)	55 (39.6%)	43 (31.0%)	5 (3.6%)	1 (0.7%)	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.*

### Sixth form

20. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good, with the quality at least satisfactory in all lessons seen and very good or excellent in over 40 per cent. In Years 12 and 13, teaching benefits from very good, sometimes exceptional, subject expertise. Students see ideas and techniques demonstrated by first-rate practitioners and explained by staff with very effective communication skills. In addition, the school's pursuit of high aspirations has been central to the experience of current sixth formers longer than for younger pupils and the majority understand and subscribe to these values. Their very positive attitudes also derive from the positive encouragement and systematic support provided by tutors and the head of sixth form.
21. In English literature, art and design, geography and drama these positive features were seen with greatest consistency. Lessons are dominated by activities that directly involve students in thinking and working independently or collaboratively. There is a complete absence of the type of lesson, seen occasionally elsewhere in the sixth form, in which students could be passive observers for any length of time. In addition, the detailed awareness of examination board requirements and techniques for helping students consolidate and recall their knowledge are demonstrated at every opportunity.

### The curriculum

**The school provides a sound curriculum** for Years 7 to 11 with a good range of subjects in the sixth form. Enrichment opportunities are good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- There are no vocational courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The recent innovation of a co-curriculum broadens experience for pupils in Year 10.
- Anomalies in the timetable hinder continuity of learning in some subjects in Years 7 to 9.
- Opportunities for participation in sports and arts activities are good.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory in some areas.
- There are insufficient technical support staff.
- Careers advice is good.

### Commentary

22. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for pupils aged 11 to 16. The recent successful bid for Science College Status has provided improved facilities and increased the range of courses offered in that area. Pupils are able to study two modern foreign languages in Years 8 and 9. Lower-attaining pupils in Years 8 and 9 follow an ASDAN course to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The curriculum in physical education is unsatisfactory because it does not fulfil statutory requirements.
23. In most other respects, the curriculum meets statutory requirements. However, religious education is not taught in the sixth form and, as was the case at the time of the previous inspection, the school is not yet providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Within



most subjects, the curriculum is satisfactory or better, and in English it is very good. The curriculum for design and technology is unsatisfactory; for younger pupils, there is not enough multi-media work, and practical skills are overemphasised at the expense of designing; in Years 10 and 11 there are no courses in electronics or systems and control, and because of a lack of CAD/CAM facilities, this aspect cannot be taught.

24. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Its strengths include allowing most pupils in Years 10 and 11 to take nine GCSE courses and the ICT short course. In addition, in Year 10, all can take the short course in religious education. It also gives the scope for a small number of pupils to follow an alternative curriculum that leads to five GCSEs, complemented by work-related learning courses at a local college. Numbers taking modern foreign languages have increased following the decision to offer Spanish instead of German. The school has also recently introduced a "co-curricular" programme for all pupils in Year 10, consisting of a widely varied range of activities including outdoor interests, business opportunities, creative and esoteric studies, and civic responsibilities. This course has proved very popular with pupils and parents. The curriculum's main weakness, in addition to subject-specific issues in design and technology, is the limited opportunity for pupils to follow vocational courses leading to national qualifications.
25. Provision for PSHE has improved since the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory. It is taught as a discrete series of lessons by a team of teachers with particular interests in this area. No specific training has been given and the quality of teaching varies: it is satisfactory overall, with some staff teaching good lessons. The aims and objectives of PSHE are clearly stated and lessons follow a well-planned programme of activities and topics. Health, sex education, careers, personal relationships, rights and responsibilities are amongst the topics discussed at appropriate stages throughout Years 7 to 11. The allocation of one teaching period per two-week timetable cycle is insufficient to cover this wide range of topics adequately. Opportunities are missed to co-ordinate the work done in PSHE lessons with tutorial time and the planned series of year assemblies. Some subjects, science for example, teach modules of work, which contribute to PSHE development, but this is not co-ordinated across the curriculum. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved since the last inspection, and several subjects contribute well. However, some opportunities are missed to develop spiritual understanding, for example in music, and cultural development, especially in art and design, religious education and history, is restricted by the limited use made of trips and visits. Good extra-curricular arrangements for gifted and talented pupils include entry for national challenge competitions in mathematics and a project for Year 9 science pupils in conjunction with quantum physicists from Oxford University. Talented musicians, both at GCSE and at A-level, are enabled to perform challenging works and develop their composition and performance through extra-curricular provision. Each year there is a summer school with an emphasis on science and mathematics. There, gifted and talented pupils are enabled to explore scientific themes through science, mathematics and art and design.
26. Extending curricular enhancement is currently good and is one of the school's improvement targets this year. The recent appointment of a member of staff to extend and promote House activities beyond sporting competition is a significant development. There is a growing range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Provision and participation in sports activities are already good and an increasing number of external coaches and school staff are contributing to the programme. Music and drama are other strong areas; their strong features are the choir and orchestra, which are scheduled to tour this year. The involvement of the sixth form in drama activities and running a drama club in the lower school are other significant developments.
27. Although the difficulties of teaching ICT in Year 10 have been resolved by improving provision within individual subjects, it is not consistently taught in all areas. The operation of a two-week cycle of the timetable hinders continuity of learning in a number of areas in Years 7 to 9, including English, modern foreign language, music and physical education.

28. Curricular planning within different subjects, a weakness noted in the previous inspection, has improved significantly. Schemes of work now provide a firm foundation for lessons in all subjects. Teachers and support staff generally match the curriculum well. Teachers, on balance, have good experience and are well qualified. A very good induction programme enables those new to the school to enhance their expertise to teach well. Whilst most departments have well qualified teachers, this is not fully the case in design and technology and in some ICT provision. In these subjects, non-specialist teachers are deployed, leading to depressed levels of achievement in some cases. A good number of support staff provide effective administrative and learning support.
29. The accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. The school is currently halfway through an extensive rebuilding and refurbishment programme and the quality of accommodation in subjects varies considerably. It is very good in science, where the new centre is modern and well equipped and in mathematics, geography and history, where recent improvements have been made. However, in art and design and design and technology, the accommodation is cramped and in poor condition. In addition, in music, one of the teaching rooms is too small, and there are not enough practice rooms for group work.

### **Sixth form**

30. In the sixth form, the curriculum is good. Students in Year 12 take four AS examinations, and in Year 13 they take three subjects at A-level. Both year groups also follow a general studies programme. Higher attainers can take additional subjects. Students choose from a range of subjects that has recently been extended to include psychology, politics and further mathematics. However, too little time is allowed for statistics, and the range of technological experience is limited by lack of CAD/CAM facilities. Some vocational courses were introduced but subsequently abandoned because of insufficient interest.
31. As part of their community service, students take part in a number of extra-curricular activities involving younger pupils. Several musical, dramatic and sports clubs are overseen by sixth-form students, and some help with the paired reading scheme. Many take part in the regular concerts, concert tours and dramatic productions. The school council is run by the sixth form.
32. Overall, the curriculum is good. The school offers a large number of courses for the size of its sixth form. With over twenty subjects at AS and A2, including well established national curriculum subjects and recently popular subjects such as psychology and sociology, the school gets a very high match between students' preferences and the courses they are offered. There have been significant numbers failing to gain pass grades on some AS courses, but this has been addressed; the school has rectified the problems that related to monitoring rather than students being incorrectly advised to follow the course. Given the highly accessible range of different approaches to post-16 provision in other local schools and colleges, this school's option to specialise in AS and A2 very effectively meets the needs of those students who choose to stay here. The place of general studies in the curriculum is uncertain and religious education provision fails to meet statutory requirements. Students are right to point out that extra-curricular activities for their age group are too limited. The informal curriculum involves a satisfactory and expanding programme of service to the school and wider community.
33. Curricular arrangements for gifted and talented students are good. In modern foreign languages, for example, lessons include telephone conversations in business settings and demanding literature and oral work with native speakers.

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

The procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. The support, advice and guidance for pupils, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development are

good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. The extent to which the school seeks to involve pupils in its work and development is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is very good, systematic monitoring of behaviour and other personal attributes.
- Induction procedures for pupils transferring from local primary schools are very good.
- The school council provides good opportunities for pupils to be involved in school matters.
- Support for pupils with English as an additional language is not always provided as soon as it should be.
- Care procedures are well established and effective.
- Tutor periods do not consistently provide periods for discussion and reflection.

### **Commentary**

34. Pupils are well known by their tutors and heads of year, and their personal progress and academic achievements are systematically monitored. Registration is effective and the educational social worker's services are used appropriately. Pupils understand the school's expectations for their behaviour and the sanctions, which apply should they step out of line. Rewards encourage individuals and tutor groups to do their best. Regular checks are made of pupils' planners, including the number of homework tasks recorded. Any such data collected is analysed and used to explain anomalies and motivate pupils to achieve their potential.
35. Pupils who transfer from a number of local primary schools are very well prepared for the transfer to secondary school. Pastoral arrangements and the transfer of documents are thorough and there are effective links between subject departments to allow continuity of learning from one stage to another. Good care is taken to aid the social integration of those who enter the school at other stages, or mid-term. The procedures in place to identify and assess special educational needs are effective. The procedures to support such pupils are good but were not fully in place during the inspection due to a short-term shortfall of support staff. The progress pupils make is appropriately assessed and recorded. There is an effective team of learning support assistants who provide appropriate assistance for pupils with special educational needs. However, pupils requiring language support do not always receive it. Although the school has a list of those who have English as an additional language, the process of evaluating pupils' needs has not yet been completed. Teaching staff lack effective guidelines about supporting them. There are no support staff assistants available to address the needs of these pupils, and the position after five weeks of the term is unsatisfactory.
36. Pupils play an effective role in school developments. Recent policy reviews on how to counter racism or bullying have involved pupils in a forum with teachers, senior managers and parents. Through the school council, pupils are able to have their say on matters which directly concern them; to voice their opinion through surveys of satisfaction, and to have matters of school practice, such as marking and assessment, explained, and express any problems which they may encounter with such policies.
37. Pupils work in a safe and secure environment, and are guided well by their tutors, teachers and heads of year. Whilst some tutor group sessions are reflective and allow time for worthwhile discussions, often related to the "thought for the day", this is not consistently so, and some of the afternoon sessions represent a poor use of time. Most pupils feel that there is an adult in whom they could confide, which includes a youth worker and school counsellor, as well as tutors and teachers. Suitable guidance is offered in making choices for GCSE and the Connexions service is appropriately involved.
38. Pupils are given good opportunities to express their opinions on a range of sensitive topics through the well-planned PSHE curriculum. The technique of 'circle time' structures the discussions and helps most pupils to develop positive attitudes to speaking and listening. Teachers sometimes do not extend pupils' contributions adequately and important issues

remain undeveloped. Because there is little co-ordination between PSHE lessons, tutorial time and subject areas, opportunities are missed to maximise pupils' understanding of the issues they are taught and relate these issues to every aspect of their own lives. In general, pupils welcome the opportunities for discussion that PSHE lessons provide.

## **Sixth form**

39. Students are offered very good advice about careers and higher education opportunities. Each student has a formal discussion with their tutor each term, and there are ample opportunities to discuss achievement against targets with teachers and the head of the sixth form. Senior prefects lead the school council, which plays an effective role in school development. Guidance about course choices during 2002-3 allowed too many students to begin AS courses they later found to be unsuitable. However, this problem has been rectified by the new head of sixth form.

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

**The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is very good.** The quality of links with the community is good and with other schools and colleges is very good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are provided with very good information about the school and their children's progress.
- Parents are involved very well in school life.
- Very good links with primary schools smooth transition from Year 6 to Year 7.
- There are extensive links with other schools.
- Members of the local community are welcomed to attend school events.

## **Commentary**

40. Parents receive very good, clear reports about their child's achievements in each subject, with indications of attainment against set targets and suggestions for improvement. The school prospectus, governors' annual report and half-termly newsletters provide relevant details on all aspects of school life. Other publications, such as welcome booklets for prospective pupils visiting on their induction day and explanations of GCSE courses, help parents to understand the courses that their children will study. Most parents express good satisfaction with the education offered to their children.
41. In addition, parents are involved in the school through the home school association, policy reviews (such as for reviews of the school day and dealing with bullying) and face-to-face meetings about their children. Whenever problems arise, parents are involved and consulted at an early stage. Response from parents is good. Attendance at consultation evenings is high and parents support their children well as spectators at sporting events and through their attendance at concerts and plays.
42. All pupils joining the school from local primary schools are visited and invited to participate in two induction days in July. There are extensive links between subject departments, which enables a smooth transfer from primary school learning to the secondary curriculum. Staff development has been enhanced by the links with Drayton School. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from the links with local colleges, which enable them to pursue an alternative curriculum suited to their individual needs.
43. All pupils in Year 10 undertake a period of work experience, which is arranged with local businesses. Members of the local community provide good support for the school's performances. The series of science lectures, using visiting speakers, which are now in their third year benefit students, parents and the general public.

## Sixth form

44. Students express very positive views about their time in the sixth form and recognise significant changes that have improved the school since they started in Year 7. They are pleased to attend and appreciate the good standards achieved and the good advice they receive. Whilst they undertake service within the school community, they would like greater enrichment to their curriculum. The extent of their involvement in the local and wider community is fairly limited.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**The overall quality of leadership and management is very good.** This is because the headteacher provides very good leadership with some excellent features and most other key staff lead and manage well. Governance is very effective.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very good overall leadership and management with excellent vision and high aspirations for the school. His strategic planning to achieve these goals is also excellent.
- Collective improvement since the last inspection has been very good, especially in raising GCSE standards and improving pupils' behaviour.
- Leadership and management in the sixth form are very good.
- In English, art and design, geography, mathematics and science, leadership and management are very effective.
- Governance is very good.
- Management is unsatisfactory in music.
- There has been too little improvement in ICT, design and technology and music.

### Commentary

45. Many contribute to the running of the school, but the headteacher's contribution to leadership and management is strongly pre-eminent. He provides very good, overall leadership and some features are outstanding. In particular, he has set out his vision of the school as a high-achieving community with great clarity and conviction. In his estimation, pupils were under-performing significantly when he took office. His analysis of what they could and should be achieving remains so well argued that staff, pupils and parents have, rightly, been convinced that improvement on a grand scale is both possible and necessary. Since his arrival, he has developed excellent plans for improvement, using a great range of strategies that direct attention precisely where it is needed and that have served the school most effectively in its pursuit of higher standards.
46. Because of his very good leadership and management and very effective support from senior colleagues, improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Expectations of teachers and subject leaders have been re-defined and tracking systems upgraded, all crucial to raising collective GCSE standards. By policy and example, the headteacher and senior colleagues have led the way in ensuring much improved behaviour and attitudes, so that the school now has a strong ethos, focused on a commitment to learning. Skilful and persistent promotion of the school's needs have led to major gains in accommodation and resources. Acquiring Science College status reflects the very good quality of the school's bid and has led to good use of the new facilities and opportunities that this status offers. In addition, improvement has been managed well in many new and successful appointments to key posts and in establishing very effective links with other schools, especially the local primary schools. The basis for further gains has been laid in the very extensive partnership with a school in challenging circumstances elsewhere in the LEA.

47. The governing body works very effectively to support and guide the school. Governors show a far greater knowledge of their school's strengths and weaknesses than is common, partly because of the flow of informative documents that reaches them efficiently, but also because they make opportunities to be on site and see the school at work. They both support and challenge the headteacher and senior colleagues as appropriate. Proposals about links with other schools and setting up the Behaviour Support Centre, for example, have been closely argued, but once decisions are made, support is consistent. The great majority of statutory duties are met, but not those relating to the act of worship, religious education in the sixth form and aspects of physical education in Years 7 to 9.
48. In several subjects, leadership and management across the school are particularly effective. In English, art and design, mathematics and science in particular, leadership is clear and highly motivational. High expectations are set, and energy and perceptive thinking characterise the work of the department. Organisation is efficient and management involves reliable monitoring of pupils' progress and the performance of colleagues. Assessment procedures and preparation for each stage of learning, whether coursework management, revision, study skills or examination technique, are applied in good time, with scope for reinforcement. Similar strengths are evident in sixth-form leadership.
49. The provision for special educational needs is well managed. There are good procedures to identify, assess, support and monitor them. The management of learning support assistants is good. The leadership and management of the provision for gifted and talented pupils are very good. The designated co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has provided some good and effective in-service training so that staff are aware of the importance of providing a sufficient element of challenge for the high attainers in their lessons. Annual audits ensure that policy is matched by practice in each curriculum area.
50. Leadership and management elsewhere are not as strong. In music, they are unsatisfactory, permitting unsatisfactory teaching in the subject in Years 7 to 9 and too little high-quality support for colleagues. In other subjects, recently appointed staff are working effectively, but ICT and design and technology have made too little improvement since the last inspection, and current leaders have a legacy of discontinuity of staff and incomplete management systems to overcome.
51. Financial management is good. A newly appointed financial manager has effective control mechanisms in place and the school has been good at bidding for additional funding. "Best value" is sought through tendering systems for school services and through very careful comparison of the school's performance with that of other schools. Recent "carry forward" amounts have been substantial because they represent earmarked funds, committed to ongoing building works. With broadly average spending, but very good overall achievement by pupils the school is giving very good value for money.

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,575,000	Balance from previous year	130,000
Total expenditure	3,347,000	Balance carried forward to the next	229,000
Expenditure per pupil	3,470		

**Sixth form**

52. The head of sixth form has only been in post six months, but he has built rapidly on the good work of his predecessor and is leading and managing very effectively. His analysis of strengths and areas to improve is very accurate and plans for raising standards have already begun to bear fruit. For instance, sixth formers and their parents show a far better awareness than usual

of subject targets because of joint presentations and discussions that involve all parties. Tutors also review progress more regularly and thoroughly than is common and the head of sixth form's monitoring and support of this activity is very good. Planning for improvement is realistic and specific: strategies for changing practice and attitudes are convincing and address comprehensively the sixth form's needs. Very good working relationships prevail in the sixth-form base and the head of sixth form makes himself very accessible to students, while being fully respected. His ambitious aims for students and high expectations about day-to-day work and conduct get a positive response and have helped establish a strong work ethic. Students work well unsupervised. These very positive attitudes prevail in lessons and contribute significantly to good learning and to rising standards.

# **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**.

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

- Results in tests and examinations have improved since the previous inspection and are now above average.
- Very good teaching displays incisive questioning and challenge, a variety of methods and efficient allocation of time.
- Pupils benefit from very good guidance on how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve and achieve very well.
- Development of reading for pleasure and information is very good.
- The use of ICT in English is below average because access to equipment is limited.

#### **Commentary**

53. Results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average overall. The proportion of pupils gaining level 6 and above was well above the national average. Results are better than those found in similar schools and represent good achievement. Over three years, girls did better than boys, following national trends. Whilst girls were well above the national profile for their gender, boys were above theirs. Results rose in 2004.
54. GCSE English results in 2003 were well above national averages. Again, girls did better than boys, but both were well ahead of the national situation. English literature results followed a similar pattern, although boys exceeded their gender profile by a higher margin than girls. GCSE English literature results rose in 2004 whilst English maintained its level. Results at the end of Year 9 and 11 have improved significantly since the last inspection.
55. By Year 9, standards of speaking and listening, reading and writing are all well above average. Pupils explain ideas clearly. They learn well from discussion in class because teachers encourage them to extend and develop their thinking through incisive questioning and giving them the opportunity to reflect on each other's ideas. Pupils read widely for pleasure, encouraged by very good teaching. They listen attentively and explain and respond well to what they read. They write confidently because teachers cover a wide range of types of texts, including letters, original stories and analyses of books and poems. Higher-attaining pupils achieve very well in response to teachers' marking, well tailored to their interests and giving precise guidance on how to do better. Lower attainers lay out their ideas coherently, but suffer from inconsistent spelling and punctuation because teachers draw attention to errors, but do not provide specific techniques for them to improve.
56. By Year 11, standards are well above average. Most pupils write fluently, ordering and communicating their thoughts in well-shaped sentences and logical paragraph structure. Pupils acquire sophisticated insights into the themes and setting of a wide range of poetry, drama and fiction and teachers engage them in well-structured classroom discussions. Boys' achievement has improved as a consequence of teachers' growing ability to encourage them and offer helpful feedback. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and teachers adapt materials and direct their classroom tasks aptly to ensure that they receive the right mixture of challenge and support. Higher attainers achieve well because written assignments



are well thought out to stimulate originality and flair. Achievement in the application of computer skills in this subject is limited because access to equipment is too restricted for the planned curriculum to be provided fully.

57. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers combine expert subject knowledge with a very good command of examination requirements. They employ vigorous questioning techniques and use time efficiently to extend and challenge pupils' understanding, and have a particularly beneficial effect on the achievement of higher-attaining pupils. Pupils achieve very well because they are fully engaged in lessons and establish a rapid work rate in response to the urgency and challenge of the teaching they receive. Their achievement is also derived from the very good guidance they receive on how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve.
58. Leadership and management are very good because subject specialists work together very well as a team and share a common purpose and sense of direction. They share teaching methods and improve collaboratively with the result that standards have improved greatly since the last inspection.

### **Drama**

59. The subject was inspected on a sample basis. Drama results were above the national average in 2003 both overall and for the proportion reaching higher grades (A\* to C). Pupils develop a deep understanding of character and motivation in plays they perform in response to well-directed questioning and exercises that promote the ability to think independently and learn together in teams. They read texts expressively and develop a secure grasp of other aspects of stagecraft, such as costume. Acting skills, such as movement, are underdeveloped and physical expression is inhibited when teachers do not identify limitations early enough or give sufficient practical guidance to help pupils overcome them.

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

60. Standards of literacy are well above average. Pupils consolidate and extend their understanding through discussion in physical education, art and design, music and history, but in registration time, mathematics, design and technology and religious education lessons, opportunities to develop understanding are inconsistent, or missed altogether. Pupils read well for information and pleasure, responding to well focused English lessons centred on the library. Middle and higher attainers write accurately and thoughtfully. In history, for example, teachers challenge pupils well to organise their ideas and reactions into well-structured and extended pieces, using specialist vocabulary well. Teaching is not always sufficiently consistent cross the subjects to ensure that lower-attaining pupils overcome their uncertainty over spelling and punctuation.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership in the department is good and there is a strong commitment to improvements in standards.
- Instability in the staffing of the department has adversely affected pupils' achievement.
- Good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 enable pupils to prepare well for examinations.
- An inconsistency amongst teachers in addressing the needs of individual pupils in Years 7 to 9 holds back achievement.
- The timetable hinders continuity in learning for some teaching groups.

## Commentary

61. After the last inspection, standards declined to a very low point in 2001, but they are now on an upward trend. Although GCSE results in French were above the national average in 2003, they were not as high as those in most other subjects. However, they improved further in 2004. The number of candidates for GCSE German is much lower than for French. Results were well below the national average in 2003, but unconfirmed figures for 2004 are well above the average for the previous year.
62. In lessons, pupils in Years 7 to 9 generally apply themselves well to reach above-average standards in both French and Spanish, which has now replaced German as the second foreign language. Their achievement is satisfactory. They have a good understanding of spoken and written language. Higher-attaining pupils in particular successfully come to terms with the rules of grammar. In situations tightly controlled by the teacher in the classroom, standards of speaking and writing are good. However, there is little independent use of the language.
63. In Years 10 and 11, just over a half of pupils continue their study of a foreign language. The progress of these pupils was hampered during their earlier years in the school by many staffing difficulties, but they now achieve well and standards are above average. They develop an increasing range of vocabulary and structures. As in Years 7 to 9, controlled speaking and writing tasks are completed well, but spontaneous use of the foreign language is rare.
64. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall, with good features. Good lessons are enlivened by a brisk pace, clear objectives and the provision of a variety of activities to develop pupils' learning step by step. However, a failure to match activities to the needs of all pupils results in confusion for some and holds back their achievement. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good. For understandable reasons associated with the pupils' prior experience, much of the teaching is directed towards effective examination practice. Pupils work hard. They understand GCSE grade criteria and appreciate being drilled for examination success, even though the range of activities offered to them is relatively narrow. Some pupils have their progress impeded by an unsatisfactory distribution of time, whereby long gaps between lessons are followed by three or four lessons in a short space of time.
65. The leadership of the department is good. There is a committed drive for improvement. The head of department leads by example and is successfully creating a team that shares a vision for the future development of the subject. There have been significant improvements in the department's management. Good schemes of work are now in place. Newly established assessment procedures and systems track the progress of all pupils. The quality of teaching is now monitored regularly. The management of the department is satisfactory because the effectiveness of the changes has been muted by the frequent changes of personnel.
66. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Well-considered changes have been made to improve standards. If the department can gain stability in its staffing, the capacity for further improvement is good.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching promotes a good ethos for learning so that pupils achieve very good results compared with national standards.
- Very good departmental leadership and management have produced very good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Pupils learn well because of very good use of assessment.

- The majority of lessons are challenging and enjoyable with good use of modern technology; others are more mundane.

## Commentary

67. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above the national average, indicating that the pupils' improvement was well above average compared with their standards on entry to the school. 2004 results were similar with slightly more pupils achieving the higher grades above levels five and six and the average points score also a fraction higher. Over time, results have continued to be well above average, improving at a rate above that seen nationally.
68. GCSE results in 2003 were also well above average. Pupils showed well above average improvement from their individual performance in Year 9. Over time, results have remained well above the national average.
69. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11, pupils' work seen in lessons and exercise books generally reflects this very strong position. On entry to the school, pupils' mathematical skills are above average. As they progress from year to year, they make very good improvement. For example, by the end of Year 9 algebraic skills improve so that even relatively lower-attaining pupils can state a problem in algebraic terms and solve it. By Year 11, high attainers can solve problems in three dimensions using Pythagoras' theorem and all pupils show much greater skills numerically than those normally seen nationally.
70. Good marking, reflecting the departmental emphasis on positive comments and very good assessment procedures, ensures that the pupils check and grade their own work against National Curriculum and GCSE standards. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils receive a comprehensive list of topics outlining the main learning points, helping them to revise and check their own progress. This means that they know where they are in relation to the syllabus and are very clear about what they need to do in order to improve.
71. Achievement is good in all years, although currently in Years 7 to 9 it is only satisfactory in lessons. This is because four of the seven teachers who teach mathematics are new to the school since the start of this year (with three of them newly qualified teachers.) They are still coming to terms with their classes and their work and are not yet reflecting fully the very good support they are being given by a very good head of department and very good departmental systems and organisation. Schemes of work, for example, are very good. They are detailed, including references to literacy, and to the use of ICT; they are cross-referenced to the National Curriculum. Each teacher has a lap top computer on which the departmental handbook, including all schemes of work and associated documentation, can be accessed through hyperlinks, which leads to effective lessons.
72. Teaching is good overall so that the pupils are enabled to learn well. In Years 7 to 9, where many of the teachers are new to the school, two thirds of the lessons observed were good or very good with the remainder satisfactory apart from one in which teaching and learning were unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, there were more good and very good lessons. Teachers are knowledgeable and there is only a small amount of non-specialist teaching in the department. Lessons are well paced and pupils respond well to the teachers' expectation that they will behave and do their best in class. The good and often very good behaviour of the pupils, stemming from good classroom management, is a significant factor in their achievement.
73. Some teaching is very good, incorporating very good use of lap top computers and the data projectors to be found in every classroom. An especially good example was seen in a quick-fire quiz where the pupils each had an infrared data sender (or "zapper"), which they used to transmit their answers to the teacher's laptop. This enabled the teacher to pace the questions precisely to the speed best suited to challenge pupils while the computer recorded answers

that could later be readily analysed to identify strengths and weaknesses. Pupils received positive feedback for right answers by seeing the racing cars representing them advancing in competition with the rest. In other lessons, however, teaching was workman-like and unimaginative with the computer equipment resting unused whilst pupils copied diagrams and notes from the board. Learning occurred, but the experience was not always as exciting.

74. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good and reflects very good leadership and management by a very good teacher whose own teaching, preparation and marking are good examples and who monitors teachers in the department effectively. He has an excellent vision of where the department should be going, based on very secure knowledge of the department's strengths and areas for development.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

75. Pupils demonstrate well above average mathematical and numerical skills that enable them to gain access to the mathematics required for understanding other subjects. Graphs and co-ordinates are effectively used in geography. In ICT, pupils enter formulae into cells in a spreadsheet and understand why they do so. In a Year 10 design and technology lesson, pupils measured both bodies and cloth accurately.
76. There is no consistency in teaching mathematics across the curriculum because there is no guidance in the form of a handbook including examples of where number work can be introduced. Nor is there an established school policy for numeracy. In some areas, such as science, there is good practice, but this stems from teachers having enough awareness to avoid making the pupils use inappropriate mechanical methods. In most departments, opportunities to enhance pupils' mathematical skills and knowledge pass unnoticed.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

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

- Pupils achieve very well by the end of Year 11.
- Standards are rising because of good teaching.
- Very good leadership has established a positive ethos and high morale.
- Management systems are being rapidly improved.
- Contributions to cross-curricular aspects of education, such as ICT, are underdeveloped.
- Accommodation and resources for learning are very good.

#### **Commentary**

77. Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above the national averages in 2003. There were no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls. When compared to the performance of pupils nationally who were at a similar standard in Year 6, these results show good achievement. Results in 2004 were similar to those in 2003. Over recent years, results have followed the national trend.
78. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that pupils in the present Year 9 are attaining similarly high standards. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are making very good progress that, if maintained, should lead to better results. Year 7 pupils of all levels of attainment already have a firm grasp of the difference between physical and chemical changes.
79. In 2003, GCSE results were well above the national averages and well above the standards reached by pupils who were at a similar level at the end of Year 9. Differences between the performance of boys and girls were similar to the national picture. All the pupils who took the

examination (almost the whole year) gained a pass grade. Results in 2004 were higher than those of 2003. Over time, standards have risen dramatically, from 43 per cent gaining higher grades (A\* to C) in 1999 to 65 per cent in 2003 and 71 per cent in 2004. The rise in standards from Years 9 to 11 shows very good achievement that is shared by all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Observation of lessons and analyses of pupils' records of work showed that the recent high standards are being maintained.

80. Overall, teaching is good. Of the lessons observed, none was unsatisfactory and many were very good. Imaginative planning that involves pupils thinking things out for themselves results in clear understanding and very secure learning. Most teachers expect high attainment and provide work of challenging difficulty. Built-in assessment for each lesson shows pupils what they have learned, which increases motivation and self-confidence. Teachers' enthusiasm, use of stimulating activities and increasingly skilful work with interactive whiteboards make pupils' learning both more effective and more enjoyable. Lower-attaining Year 9 pupils, some with special educational needs, gained a good understanding of the scientific basis underlying the harmful effects of smoking because of a dramatic experimental demonstration, excellent visual aids and sensitive handling by the teacher.
81. Less successful teaching is due to work being too easy and lessons moving at a pedestrian pace, resulting in less progress being made than should be.
82. The present head of department took over after a very disruptive period, during which there were several changes in management compounded by a high staff turnover. Well supported by senior colleagues, he has transformed the situation. Teachers and the very effective technicians now work together as a mutually supportive team, all fully committed to improving the quality of pupils' experience of science.
83. Inadequate management systems have been re-structured and are becoming increasingly effective. The new schemes of work for Years 7 to 9, based on the national strategy, are already resulting in better standards. More rigorous assessment procedures and close monitoring of teaching are improving the quality of learning. Support and guidance for inexperienced colleagues and continuing professional development for all teachers are excellent.
84. Despite teachers' enthusiasm and expertise, the use of ICT to enrich learning in science is unsatisfactory. This is entirely due to inadequacies in the equipment. There has not been enough time for present managers to fully develop other areas of cross-curricular education, such as citizenship. The head of department has an accurate analysis of the remaining weaknesses and the development plan is detailed, has sensible priorities and an achievable time scale.
85. The new science block provides a very good environment for science in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and has lifted the spirits of pupils and teachers. In the short term, however, the move has imposed additional burdens on the already very hard-working technicians, and absorbed a lot of management time.
86. Since the last inspection there has been very good improvement, most of which is attributable to the present managers.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The provision of ICT in the discrete courses is **satisfactory**. The provision of cross-curricular ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are below average throughout Years 7 to 11.

- Leadership and management have recently improved and are now good.
- The progress made by pupils this term in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory.
- Resources have recently improved and the pupil-to-computer ratio is close to the national average.
- Though some non-specialist teachers use ICT well in their subjects, cross-curricular ICT is overall unsatisfactory.
- The school has recently appointed a manager of cross-curricular ICT and has begun the process of developing a whole-school scheme of work.

## **Commentary**

87. In the 2004 teacher assessments, pupils in Year 9 were awarded estimated levels that were above national averages in previous years. However, the inspector's analysis of a sample of the work from last year's Year 9 shows that standards were below average, primarily because pupils were particularly weak in the area of control technology and data logging. These ICT strands have received little attention. The progress of pupils in the present Year 9 is much improved and is now at least satisfactory. This is because an experienced head of ICT has been recently appointed from within the school and has introduced much-improved schemes of work that cover all the National Curriculum requirements. He has developed good assessment and lesson-planning procedures.
88. Results in 2004 in the GCSE short course ICT examination were well below average and well below pupils' capabilities. The impact of teaching leading to these results was poor: it was discontinuous, pupils' work reveals too little guidance on how to improve and value-added scores are weak. However, whilst standards are still below average, the new regime has already resulted in much more structure to the course for the present Year 11 and teaching is now much improved and progress is at least satisfactory. A number of pupils in Year 10 are following a full course GCSE ICT. They are well taught and are making good progress. The remainder of Year 10 does not follow any dedicated ICT course and the statutory requirement for all pupils to be taught the full range of National Curriculum programmes of study is not met. An experienced subject manager has been given the responsibility of developing cross-curricular ICT and is already developing the framework needed to deliver it effectively. This will include a whole-school scheme of work and necessary assessment procedures.
89. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Planning is good and schemes of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are based on the National KS3 ICT Strategy guidelines. Lesson planning provides the challenge and structure pupils need to make good progress. Much of the teaching is by an experienced teacher who is new to ICT teaching and who is working hard to develop her expertise. The stronger teaching features clear introductions, relevant main activities and final sessions that communicate the progress made and celebrate achievement. Where teaching is less secure, there is poor control and management of pupils and little learning then takes place. Teaching and learning in the Year 10 GCSE full course are good. Teaching is well focused, planning is good and there is good subject knowledge.
90. Current leadership and management are good, but there has been too little overall improvement since the last inspection because of discontinuity in staffing and curricular provision. The assistant headteacher in charge of ICT has experience plus the vision and management skills necessary to effect change and current staff are making great strides towards providing better opportunities for pupils. Technical support is effective.

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

91. The provision of cross-curricular ICT is unsatisfactory. There are few opportunities for pupils to develop skills across the curriculum, though there are examples of good practice within departments, such as physical education and art and design. In the past, the poor performance of pupils in ICT across the school has been the result of a lack of planned

provision. The newly appointed cross-curricular ICT manager is beginning to provide a framework for planning that will ensure a systematic approach to cross-curricular ICT.

## HUMANITIES

### History

Provision in history is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Year 11 attain standards in their classwork that are well above national expectations.
- Between Years 7 and 11, pupils make good progress.
- The teaching is very good.
- Leadership and management are good.

#### Commentary

92. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are well above average, judged by teachers' assessments of National Curriculum levels. The standards in classes seen and in pupils' work are above average. Pupils' handling of different forms of historical data is good, and they work effectively as individuals or in pairs and groups to develop their understanding of history. They use historical sources well and are particularly adept in their use of key elements such as historical enquiry. This skill improves their attainment. For example, in their studies on the impact of the industrial revolution on life in the country, pupils consider their sources very effectively, using them to underpin arguments about the advantages and disadvantages introduced by key features of the period, such as urbanisation.
93. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their teachers know them well, use good differentiated materials, and provide effective guidance in lessons. Pupils' overall progress is hampered by a lack of artefacts and visits and there is insufficient use of the recently acquired IT technology, particularly interactive white boards, to support their understanding of the subject and ensure a high level of presentation of work.
94. Results at GCSE over the last three years have been above national levels. In Year 11, pupils' attainment is well above average. Pupils develop their analytical skills effectively and the higher attainers demonstrate a high degree of sophistication in their ability to engage in empathetic history and in preparing for and presenting classwork. For example, Year 11 pupils, in their studies of the holocaust, demonstrated maturity in dealing with the moral outrage together with a clear historical analysis of the evidence. Pupils make good progress at this stage of their learning, but their lack of wider reading has a negative impact on their examination results.
95. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers have an obvious love for their subject and their commitment and enthusiasm are strongly communicated to pupils, providing a firm basis for learning in most classes. Where teaching is good, it is characterised by flexibility in pace and challenge, involving a wide range of methods that support learning well. Where teaching is less strong, teachers do not always employ effective strategies to deal with the less-motivated pupils. Homework is set regularly and marking is well focused, supporting progress, learning and achievement. Learning is very good. In several lessons, pupils worked very effectively in mixed pairs, a method of organisation thoughtfully employed by the department, mindful of supporting the attainment of both girls and boys. Pupils generally behave well, with high concentration and focus, though there is a small but not insignificant minority of pupils, mainly lower-attaining boys, whose concentration lapses and leads to poor behaviour.
96. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has produced documents that signal his clarity of vision about the future of the department. The documents underpin much of the good work of the department, particularly in the areas of formal and informal assessment,

and in effective teaching. In this, he is supported particularly effectively by his colleagues whom he, in turn, supports. He is aware of the need for even more rigorous challenges for the gifted and talented pupils and for the dissemination of strategies to deal with lower-attaining boys. He and his colleagues are excellent role models of commitment to the maintenance of the highest standards.

97. Good improvement has been made on the pleasing situation described in the previous report, particularly in the areas of innovative teaching, which encourages independent learning.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching has led to an improvement in standards.
- Assessment is effective, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Good strategies have been introduced to raise standards at GCSE.

## **Commentary**

98. In geography, pupils' attainment on entry is average by national standards. At the end of Year 9, levels are above average, a judgement supported by work seen in class and in teachers' assessments. This represents good achievement. Basic geographical and number skills are put in place in Year 7, for example, in work on longitude and latitude and in enjoyable games planned to test knowledge of co-ordinates. Written skills develop over the three years and style evolves well, leading to extended writing on topics such as the factors effecting farming in the U.K. By Year 9, pupils, regardless of gender or ethnicity, have learned sound enquiry techniques and a good technical vocabulary. Much of their work is enhanced by use of ICT skills and the good programme of fieldwork, including visits to Lulworth Cove. Homework is set regularly and assessment is both thorough and helpful in targeting improvement. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 11 have steadily improved since 2000. In 2003, A\* to C grades were above average, with boys' grades well above. Pupils taking geography did better than in all their other subjects. Again, achievement was good. In 2004, under-achieving boys lowered the overall proportion of A\* to C grades, but girls continued their trend of improvement.
99. In Years 10 and 11, pupils build on skills acquired in Years 7 to 9 and learn to work more independently. In coursework, they also learn to hypothesise, devise a methodology, gather and analyse data and reach valid conclusions. Pupils' understanding of processes and patterns grows and most exhibit a strong appreciation of the environment in their work. Presentation of work is not a strong point and spelling is often poor. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 11 have steadily improved since 2000. In 2003, A\* to C grades were above the average with boys' results well above. Work seen in lessons confirms that attainment is above average.
100. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11. Teachers are knowledgeable and present work in an interesting way, constantly reinforced by a variety of activities and techniques, including good use of PowerPoint presentations. Pupils are generally attentive and gain confidence from the teaching as they learn to think for themselves. Most engage happily and diligently in their work. Schemes of work do not readily identify and provide materials for pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented.
101. Leadership and management are very good and have led to steady improvement over the last four years. The department is well organised and with a new, united and expert staff has the capacity to further improve where necessary.



102. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, particularly in the areas of teaching, standards and the use of ICT.

### **Religious education**

Provision for religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Schemes of work are well written and planned.
- Examination results for pupils entered for the short course GCSE are good.
- Higher-attaining pupils are challenged well in Years 10 and 11.
- ICT is insufficiently used.
- The range of curricular opportunities is limited. There are no plans to include a full GCSE course, nor any A-level work.

### **Commentary**

99. Standards of pupils' attainment by Year 9 meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. All pupils, including those who have special educational needs, and the higher-attaining pupils, make sound progress.
100. By Year 11, attainment overall is also in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. However, under a third of the Year 11 pupils took the short course GCSE examinations in 2004. Results for these pupils are good: over 90 per cent gained A\* to C grades, and the results have improved steadily year on year. These pupils are challenged well, and rise to that challenge successfully, and therefore achieve well. Since September 2004, almost all pupils in Year 10 study the short GCSE course for two years.
101. The quality of teaching and learning is generally satisfactory, with some teaching or learning or both that is good. Teachers plan so that there are opportunities for pupils to express their own ideas. For example, in a lively Year 8 lesson about the Jewish New Year, pupils were asked to discuss resolutions they may have made themselves at New Year. In classes where pupils' attainment is lower, appropriate activities are planned for them. A Year 11 group was absorbed with an extract from a film about a body-building child. They entered into an animated discussion about whether this made for exploitation or not. Year 7 pupils, working on signs and symbols, asked some good questions and a fruitful discussion followed, to which nearly all contributed.
102. Teachers use resources well, particularly the range of video films available. These are of a good quality and frequently provoke discussions, as in a Year 7 lesson with a very good film showing signs and symbols in and around a church. Year 10 pupils saw a short extract about some controversial views expressed by an Anglican priest, which posed some demanding questions for them and led to good learning.
103. Leadership is good and the head of department has offered good support to the team. Schemes of work are now good and much improved since the last inspection. Management is satisfactory, but there are areas for development including better use of ICT, which is unsatisfactory at present. In addition, opportunities for pupils are more limited than usual. For example, although the results of the short course are good, and steadily rising, there is no scope for wider study of the subject through a full GCSE course and no plans to offer post-16 courses. Also, the statutory provision in the sixth form for religious education is unsatisfactory. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils currently in Years 9 and 11 are underachieving.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and is having a negative effect on standards and attitudes.
- Resources are unsatisfactory.
- There are no facilities for pupils to experience computer-aided design and manufacture.
- A complex staffing structure, with some non-specialist teaching, adversely affects standards and progress.
- There is a weakness in teaching design skills, particularly in resistant materials technology.
- Despite very recent changes, there are weaknesses in the curriculum.
- Good, new leadership is beginning to address these weaknesses.

#### Commentary

104. GCSE results in 2003 were just above average and comparative data indicates that achievement was satisfactory. Provisional results for 2004, however, show a significant decline to well below national averages for previous years and indicate underachievement by these pupils. When each technology subject is considered separately, results for textiles and resistant materials were both better than other areas in 2003.
105. Teachers' assessments for pupils in Year 9 are well above the national average, but give an inflated picture of attainment at this stage. Assessment procedures have recently been modified, but have not been in existence long enough to have made an impact on raising standards or creating a culture where assessment is used effectively as a means of tracking attainment and progress.
106. Standards reached by pupils in Year 9 are average. Pupils make insufficient progress throughout Years 7 to 9 and achievement is unsatisfactory. In general, research and analysis skills are not well developed and pupils do not work with sufficient independence. Pupils' graphic work is below average and only a few higher-attaining pupils are able to use three-dimensional sketching as an effective means of recording and communicating ideas. Pupils do not take sufficient care with the presentation of their work and much of it is not stored in a systematic way. In resistant materials, pupils can often make products to an acceptable standard but their understanding and application of design skills is below average. Standards in textiles are above average and higher than in other areas because pupils are being taught to work in a more organised way. Consequently, greater progression is evident in their work. Higher-attaining pupils are able to use ICT to improve both the content and presentation of their work, but this is not widespread and is often done at home.
107. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average. Standards in textiles are higher than in other areas because pupils have better independent working skills and can use them to assemble more detailed project folders. Lack of such skills in food technology lowers the quality of work in folders. Work in resistant materials is below average and an overemphasis on manufacturing skills has led to the neglect of designing skills. Projects rely too heavily on work with wood. Some practical construction techniques lack sophistication and do not provide opportunities for pupils to develop higher-order skills. Pupils in graphics do not have the opportunity to explore computer-aided design. Progress and achievement are unsatisfactory.
108. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some examples of good practice. Consistency is a problem, however. Because of recruitment difficulties, there has been discontinuity in staffing

and this unsettled situation has led to the attitudes and expectations of some pupils being at variance with the present team of teachers, who are slowly beginning to establish their own working procedures. Good teaching, as evidenced in one well-taught Year 8 textiles lesson, is characterised by structured lessons where objectives are clearly explained, expectations are high and teachers have an understanding of how literacy and numeracy skills can be developed through design and technology. Where teaching is only satisfactory, the limited expertise of non-specialist teaching fails to extend pupils fully. It does not develop a topic and explore it in sufficient depth, nor does it encourage pupils to develop verbal skills. In some cases, teachers do not employ appropriate techniques to develop design skills or independent learning skills. Routine, maintenance tasks are not being carried out and this is compounding difficulties with accommodation and resources. This is partly because of a temporary lack of technician support.

109. The newly appointed head of department is providing good leadership and is managing a very difficult situation well. He has analysed weaknesses and produced an appropriate development plan to address them. He is rightly concentrating on assessment and curriculum development as key factors in improving standards. However, the magnitude of the problem he faced on taking up his appointment only a short time before the inspection is such that it will take time for improvements to have an impact on standards. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory and, although extensive improvements are planned, they do not provide present pupils with a stimulating environment for studying design and technology. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average.
- Leadership and management are very good, and there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Teaching and learning are very good, and pupils achieve very well as a result.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to study art at first hand.

### **Commentary**

110. Standards in Year 9 are well above average. Pupils' achievement is very good, and they make very good gains in the skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. Their drawing skills grow very rapidly, and they confidently use line and tone to represent three-dimensional form. Oil pastel work is vigorous, and paintings based on the work of the Pointillists are very lively. Pastel studies, informed by the work of Breughel, show a rapidly increasing knowledge of perspective; they convincingly represent depth as the landscape fades into the distance. However, whilst ICT is used very effectively to manipulate images, its use is not widespread enough to fully extend all pupils' work.
111. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, results were well above average and very high in 2004. In recent years, results have usually been well above average. Pupils usually do much better in their art and design than in their other subjects. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. Pupils' achievement continues to be very good. Their composition work is assured and confident, and they create landscape and still-life pictures which carefully balance lines, shapes and colours. Pupils often study the art of other cultures, and create vibrant paintings which use colour very effectively. ICT is used very well to produce interesting multiple portraits, and to make striking studies of fruit and vegetables. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to study the world of art at first hand, and they lack a real understanding of scale or broader painting techniques as a result.

112. Teaching and learning are very good. Strong features of the teaching are the very good individual advice that pupils receive, and the attention to detail seen in many lessons. For example, pupils have to look closely at how applying chalk flattens the grain of the paper, or consider how the exact position of a paintbrush affects the marks it makes. Pupils are drawn in to the work through this attention to detail and the insistence on pursuing high standards. Work is modified and changed as pupils work and they build on their strengths. Interest levels grow as the lesson progresses, and are often very high. These factors consistently produce very good learning.
113. Leadership and management are very good. There has been a focus on raising standards, and improving teaching and learning, which has been very successful. Results at GCSE have improved considerably since the previous inspection, and standards have risen in all years. Improvement since the previous inspection is therefore very good.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in GCSE are consistently very good.
- There is a wide range of challenging extra-curricular activities.
- Teaching and learning and pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory.
- ICT is not used to support learning.
- Management, accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

114. Results at GCSE in 2004 were well above the national average, repeating the pattern of recent years, and reflect standards that are similar to those seen during the inspection. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is good. Most pupils are confident performers. Higher attainers compose extended, well-structured pieces that show a clear understanding of style; average attainers compose pieces that show they understand their own instrument, but phrases are not always properly balanced and the match of melody to harmony is insecure. Lower attainers complete their compositions by following guidelines properly, but need to listen more critically to ensure their work makes good sense in musical terms. Few pupils use ICT as a composing tool.
115. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good and pupils learn well. Experienced and well-informed teaching ensures that pupils are well prepared for the demands of the GCSE examination. In addition, most pupils benefit from highly challenging extra-curricular activities that provide good performing opportunities. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. Although much work has been done recently to improve the relevance of the scheme of work, identified as a weakness in the previous inspection, there is still too much reliance on testing knowledge at the expense of developing pupils' creative abilities. There is no proper identification of the skills that pupils need in order to progress systematically through the syllabus and enjoy making music. The continual splitting of lessons between two rooms interrupts the continuity of learning and frequently causes disruptive behaviour. Pupils are having much less teaching time than is adequate to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum, and the balance between attainment targets is poor.
116. Standards at the end of Year 9 are broadly average. This is the outcome both of teachers' assessments and work seen during the inspection. Higher attainers make sound progress, but a significant number of pupils of average and below average attainment underachieve. Pupils enter the school with average attainment in music and most make satisfactory progress in Year 7, although their limited social skills prevent some from making better progress. Some

pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress because they do not have sufficient support. Similar problems persist in Years 8 and 9. This, coupled with restricted lesson time because of the way the syllabus is organised and taught, leads to unsatisfactory achievement in Year 9. Pupils have reasonably secure knowledge of basic musical terms, and, with help, can read staff notation and find notes on the keyboard. They lack fluency in aspects of their work and many are confused about some aspects of notation conventions, and their listening skills are unsatisfactory.

117. Leadership is satisfactory but management is unsatisfactory. The head of department has worked hard at evolving a more relevant scheme of work, and has implemented a logical assessment system. He gives a great deal of his time and expertise to a number of extra-curricular activities, which include regular concerts and foreign tours. The accommodation problems noted in two earlier inspections are as yet unresolved. One room is too small; there is a serious lack of separate spaces in which pupils can easily hear their work and begin to listen critically and to refine their efforts; and practice rooms used for instrumental teaching are over-heated and too resonant. There are insufficient classroom instruments, ICT equipment is not properly used, and recording equipment and other music technology are poor. Although there are four computers and good software, these are underused. There is regular monitoring, but it has not been fully effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the department.

118. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement across Years 7 to 11 is good.
- Standards in GCSE are steadily improving along with the numbers selecting the subject.
- Pupils are well informed of their progress through a well-structured assessment system.
- Timetabling arrangements adversely affect the continuity of learning for too many groups.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 does not meet National Curriculum requirements.

### **Commentary**

119. Standards of work in Years 7 to 9 are generally good in a range of games and gymnastics. Pupils exhibit a variety of skills in rugby, badminton and hockey, often accompanied by technical accuracy. Whilst some lack controlled execution, others are at an advanced stage and perform confidently in games.

120. In gymnastics, pupils show a good range of ideas and many perform individual and paired balances with control. Girls are less ambitious than boys in performing but show greater fluency and poise in performing sequences with extensive use of large apparatus. All pupils move apparatus and equipment safely and efficiently. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 is good when units of work allow pupils to pursue an activity to some depth. However, the understanding of principles of attack and defence in games does not always fully match the development of skills.

121. Core physical education in Years 10 and 11 did not take place during the inspection, but in GCSE, pupils achieve well with an improving number gaining A\* to C grades. Results in 2003 were in line with the national average. For some pupils, their grade for GCSE was their best grade. Numbers taking the subject at this level have increased dramatically, particularly the girls. Interim assessments indicate higher standards amongst current Year 11 than last year. In football, there are examples of very good individual skills and the majority of pupils make good progress. Their knowledge of rules and tactical considerations is also good. Standards of

work in theory lessons are improving, with the majority of Year 10 pupils showing an appropriate knowledge of the nature and function of bones in the skeleton and Year 11 pupils demonstrating informed insights into the reasons for participation in sport.

122. Achievement across Years 7 to 11 is good. The incidence of non-participation is minimal. A significant number of boys and an increasing number of girls develop and refine their skills in the strong extra-curricular sports programme. There are rich opportunities for a large number of pupils to engage in internal or external school competition. Many clubs also exist for those pupils who wish to participate and improve rather than compete. A growing number of teaching staff and external club coaches contribute to this programme. However, too many pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not meet the National Curriculum recommendation of two hours of physical activity each week.
123. Overall, teaching is good. The majority is at least satisfactory, with much of it good or very good. Across Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good. There are challenging objectives and teachers provide stimulating demonstrations and planned progressions, at brisk pace with a variety of tasks. Teaching in a Year 7 lesson developing tackling in rugby was very good: tasks set were realistic for the wide range of attainment within the group. Distinctive features of the teaching are the good command of the subject and the healthy balance of individual, small-group and whole-class activity. Teachers offer good role models and often offer inspiration by demonstration.
124. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is a reflective culture and the desire of the teaching team to pursue excellence but marry this with a 'sport for all' ethos means that overall provision for sport in the school is good and much improved under the relatively new head of department. The thoughtful grouping arrangements, the framework for assessment and the well-structured units of work are all significant improvements that are helping to extend pupils at all levels. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

Business studies is offered as a GCSE course, but was not part of the inspection contract. However, take-up is good and in 2003, results matched national averages.

### **Work-related learning**

Overall provision in work-related learning is **satisfactory**. It is still at a developmental stage in the school's curriculum. The programme of extended work experience for identified pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good but the provision of vocational courses is undeveloped. The programme of careers education is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are good opportunities for some pupils to take part in off-site learning.
- No vocational courses are offered to pupils.
- A good programme of careers education enables all pupils to be aware of future opportunities.
- Pupils' awareness of work-related learning is underdeveloped in the everyday curriculum.

### **Commentary**

125. Some elements of work-related learning are well planned and delivered by the school through its good links with businesses and the Connexions service. All pupils in Year 10 take part in two weeks of work experience and some in Years 10 and 11 follow a programme of extended work experience as part of the school's alternative curriculum. A good range of placements includes retail, catering, garage, construction, hairdressing and nursery services. The pupils express positive attitudes in their diaries and speak enthusiastically about how they are learning to develop skills in organising, in dealing with adults and in working as members of

teams. In addition to managing the extended work experience programme for these pupils, the school ensures that they are all able to have lessons in the mainstream curriculum and study five GCSE subjects.

126. There is a good programme of careers education for all pupils, including those in the sixth form. It is provided through PSHE and enhanced by good links with the Connexions service. A successful careers fair is held in January each year. All Year 11 pupils are interviewed individually by the headteacher.
127. The school has carried out an audit to assess the contribution made by a wide range of subjects to the development of work-related skills. However, there is no coherent planning to develop pupils' awareness of the relevance of those skills. The school has recently introduced a "co-curricular programme" of optional units enhancing the formal curriculum for all pupils in Year 10: whilst it includes work-related learning features, it is too early to measure its effectiveness.
128. The provision of vocational courses is undeveloped in the main school and the school recognises the need for more options and greater flexibility in the Year 10 and 11 curriculum. In the sixth form, there is a strategic and logical focus on A-level courses.

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

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

No lessons specifically designated as citizenship were seen during the inspection, so it is not possible to judge standards, or the quality of teaching.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Citizenship is addressed across a satisfactory range of subjects.
- Citizenship has a secure place in pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE).
- There are good opportunities for pupils to contribute their own views in discussions.
- Pupils have the chance to take some responsibility within the school.

### **Commentary**

129. Citizenship is taught through the school's programme of PSHE and through subject areas.
130. In the PSHE lessons seen, the quality of teaching and learning was at least satisfactory, sometimes good.
131. The school has carried out an audit of where citizenship is to be found across the subjects. For example, Years 7 to 9 consider values and the issues of right and wrong. Within this theme, the history curriculum enables discussion on the dropping of the atom bomb in the Second World War. When the planning for citizenship calls for community and voluntary activities as a theme, the school offers pupils opportunities such as the First Orchestra and its performances, among many others.
132. Citizenship is specifically addressed and satisfactorily included in the PSHE programme. For example, pupils study the work of the United Nations, learn how votes are used, and apply some mathematical skills in working out the percentages of the votes cast. Most subject areas identify the elements of citizenship addressed in their work, though this is not true throughout the curriculum.
133. There are many opportunities for pupils to express their own views, as well as listen to those of

others. For example in a Year 9 PSHE lesson, pupils used their circle time technique for expressing personal views, leading to a good discussion that allowed everyone to listen and to speak without interruption.

134. The school council, open to all tutor groups, provides a forum for pupils to discuss how aspects of the school might be improved and enables them to take some responsibility within the community of the school.

135. Leadership and management of citizenship are contained in the organisation of PSHE and are satisfactory. Pupils are assessed and given levels of attainment.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

### 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	5	100	98.6	60	50.2	96	87.5
Biology	10	100	96.4	20	39.2	66	78.6
Design and technology (2003 AS. No A2 in 2003 or 2004)	7	71	NA	0	NA	NA	NA
Drama (2004, unvalidated; no A2 in 2003)	5	100	NA	80	NA	NA	NA
English literature	15	100	99.5	80	46.5	105.3	86.5
Geography	14	100	98.7	14.3	45.5	74.3	84
Mathematics	13	100	96.7	38.5	55.6	81.5	88.8
Physics	7	100	96.7	42.9	44.6	88.6	81.7
PE	4	100	98	50	30.9	85	75.2

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are well above average and have improved since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is very good; it is based on very good specialist knowledge, deployed well through a variety of methods to stimulate independent thinking and intellectual challenge.
- Achievement is very good as students build well on exiting knowledge and skills, and teachers help them to grasp new ideas quickly.
- Advice given to students on how to improve written assignments lacks detail.



## Commentary

136. Results in English literature in 2003 at A2 were well above average, both overall and in the proportion reaching the higher grades, A and B. Standards rose from the previous year, and from the time of the previous inspection. Gender comparisons are not appropriate given the small number of boys taking the subject.
137. Standards in work seen reflect examination results. Year 12 students have a very good grasp of key elements of structure, symbolism and manipulation of tension in plays such as Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, in response to very methodical teaching. They have a good understanding of the historical and social background to Victorian poetry through well-organised, independent research, demonstrating a critical and emotional response, for example, in their own original poetry.
138. By Year 13, students develop the ability to think independently in their appreciation of texts, responding to well-focused questioning, which deploys high levels of specialist knowledge. Students consider and summarise contrasting critical views and convey their own judgements confidently, basing their arguments on detailed evidence from the set texts.
139. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use high levels of specialist knowledge to consolidate and extend understanding. They plan lessons to engage students' enthusiasm and curiosity by means of a stimulating variety of activities. These include whole-class and small-group discussions and contrasting types of writing, which lead to high levels of autonomous thinking. Students benefit from a very good mixture of challenge and support in the individual coaching and prompting they receive as they work together. Written assignments are marked authoritatively and sensitively, so that students receive very constructive and comprehensive feedback on their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunity to reflect on them. However, advice given to students on how to correct their weaknesses lacks sufficient detail.
140. Achievement is very good because teachers help students to grasp new ideas quickly and offer vigorous intellectual challenge in their lessons. They build on existing knowledge and skills progressively, both from previous lessons and homework, and from preceding years.
141. Leadership and management are very good and have underpinned rising standards since the last inspection as a result of improved teaching methods, developed and shared well by specialist staff working as a team. This has enabled the subject to make good improvement since the last inspection.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

142. Students' standards of literacy are above average. Teachers encourage them to use good discussion and writing skills to explore new ideas. Students have a good capacity to locate information in reference books and other texts.

## MATHEMATICS

The school offers courses leading to mathematics at AS and A2 levels. The students study a combination of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Three of the four teachers of mathematics were observed teaching in pure mathematics and statistics lessons. Students' work from each of the disciplines was scrutinised. Representative samples of students were interviewed to gain their views of the provision made for them.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and courses are very well organised; together they produce good results.
- Very good assessment of the students' work helps them make good progress.
- Less teaching time is allocated for statistics than is usually the case and the students feel that their work is more pressured in this area.
- Some lessons could be made more interesting and use the available teaching technology more effectively.

## Commentary

143. A2 results in 2003 were in line with national averages. 2004 results were better. The students' performance, compared with their previous attainment levels, showed that most performed at or above expected levels, with those beginning from a weaker position having studied GCSE at intermediate rather than higher level performing better than might have been expected. Hence achievement is good.
144. AS results were very high in 2003, but lower in 2004. Lower scores in statistics than in the other two disciplines contributed to this position. Less time than is usual is devoted to teaching the statistics module of the course; students feel they were more under pressure with this topic than with the pure mathematics element.
145. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above the national average in Year 13 and broadly in line in Year 12. The work of Year 13 students varied between potentially grade A to grade D. In statistics, most show a secure grasp of the use of a binomial distribution to calculate constant probability for a fixed number of trials. Some, however, found difficulty in recalling work from last year on variance. In pure mathematics, all show a good grasp of basic calculus, including volumes of revolution and differentiation of composite functions. Year 12 students range in attainment from those who are experiencing difficulties to those who are likely to achieve the highest grades. Higher-attainers understand and can use surds and indices. They can complete the square for quadratic functions and use it to find maximal and minimal values. Lower attainers fail to solve equations involving negative and zero indices. Sound induction arrangements, in particular providing extra work on algebra, enable some, but not all, students who studied at intermediate level GCSE to hold their own on the Alevel courses.
146. Overall teaching is good so that the students learn well and are making good progress. Teachers are all well qualified. Much of the learning is very well supported by teaching that is challenging and very well presented. Very good use is often made of data projectors with laptop computers. An example was a lesson on sketching the modulus of a function in which the teacher was able to maintain very good pace, in part because of the instantaneous availability of examples, diagrams and graphs through computer images. Where the teaching was no better than satisfactory, less effective use was made of the computer projector. Opportunities for showing the effect of the discriminant on a quadratic function graphically were missed in a Year 12 pure mathematics lesson. In this lesson, as in others, however, the learning was good. This is because of constructive marking of the students' work both by teachers and by the students themselves. Assessment arrangements are very effective, with students marking their work to examination standards, aided by the same templates that examiners use, which enables them to understand very clearly where they are making mistakes and what these errors cost in terms of exam marks. Most students show very positive attitudes to their work and try hard. Folders are, for the most part, well kept and full with carefully marked and corrected examples. The course requirements and lesson notes for several of the courses, together with schemes of work, are also very well organised and are now being made available for students on the internet.

147. Hence the leadership and management are very good and have secured good improvement since the time of the previous inspection. The students enjoy mathematics and the challenge involved. Numbers studying the subject are healthy.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

148. In general, students' skills in mathematics are good, enabling effective study of other subject areas. In a Year 12 economics class, for example, students could understand the relevant themes underlying the incidence of poverty and analyse and interpret graphical representations of the data involved. On balance, however, mathematics is less evident across the curriculum than is the case in many other schools and the mathematics department makes little direct contribution to key skills development at sixth form level beyond what is taught for specialist mathematics students.

## **SCIENCE**

The foci of the inspection were biology and physics. In addition, chemistry was sampled. Students' work was examined and results analysed. It was not possible to observe any chemistry lessons, but all the teachers responsible were observed teaching in other contexts. A-level results were above the national averages in 2003 and better in 2004, when five out of seven candidates attained higher grades (A or B). Evidence gathered indicates that the subject is well managed, well taught and that high standards are being maintained.

### **Biology**

Provision in biology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership is very good.
- Standards are rising because of good teaching.
- Too many students fail to gain pass grades at AS level.
- Management systems that underlie teaching are being rapidly improved.

### **Commentary**

149. In the 2003 A-level examination the overall standard was below average, though all candidates passed. Too few gained higher grades (A or B). When these results are compared to the students' performance at GCSE, they show satisfactory achievement. In 2004, results were much better, with eight out of fourteen gaining a higher grade. This demonstrates good achievement. The standards reached by the present Year 13 students are not as high, being broadly average; however, given their attainment at GCSE, all are making good progress and achieving well.

150. In 2003, AS level was taken by seventeen students, of whom fourteen passed and seven gained higher grades. However, in 2004, whilst many more entered, too many failed and this indicates unsatisfactory achievement at AS. In the present year 12, there are 26 students. Many are building well on a strong performance at GCSE and making good progress. Some, however, are struggling with the difficulty of AS-level work and finding it hard to motivate themselves to the level of effort needed. Overall, current Year 12 achievement is satisfactory.

151. Teaching is good, based on excellent subject mastery and an infectious enthusiasm for biology that is inspiring many students. Teaching methods are imaginative and constantly encourage independence. Modelling, for example, helped many Year 12 students to understand the complexity of cell membranes. Learning is not always as effective as the quality of teaching indicates that it should be. This is a consequence of the somewhat passive attitudes shown

by some students, particularly in Year 12. They are unwilling to take responsibility for their own learning and rely almost entirely on the efforts of teachers. They can be unresponsive in class and do not undertake sufficient independent study outside lessons.

152. The recently appointed head of department has established very good teamwork and high morale, with a clear sense of purpose. The work of the four teachers who share the classes is well organised, so that students get a coherent experience of the subject. Structures underlying the courses, such as schemes of work and assessment, have been evaluated and are being rapidly improved. Support and guidance for inexperienced colleagues are exemplary. Additions to the provision, such as a residential field trip and visits to the scanning microscope at a nearby university, have enriched learning and been of particular value to the most gifted students.
153. Many students start AS level and subsequently find the work too difficult, or that their choice of subject is not as appropriate to their ambitions as they thought. These students complete the course, but do not achieve satisfactorily. The presence of a significant proportion of failing students, in relatively large classes, inevitably hampers the rate of progress for the whole group.
154. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, most of it occurring over the last eighteen months.

## Physics

Provision in physics is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Good teaching is resulting in all students achieving well and some very well.
- Results at A-level are above the national average.
- The uptake by girls has been low but is slowly improving.
- Some students are not succeeding on the AS level course because of weak mathematical skills.

### Commentary

155. In the A-level in 2003, all passed and the overall performance was above the national average. In 2004, results were better. When compared to their attainment at GCSE, these results show good overall achievement with significant numbers achieving very well. The present Year 13 students' standards are average. They did not have as high a level of attainment at GCSE and although there is likely to be a smaller number of higher grades (A or B), all are in line to pass and are achieving well.
156. Results in the AS examinations have been too variable. In 2003, seven candidates all passed and four gained higher grades. In 2004, more students started the course, but results were not as good, and there was a higher proportion of lower grades and fails.
157. Teaching is always good and much is very good. Lessons are based on a problem-solving approach that encourages students to learn actively and results in good understanding. Teachers' enthusiasm for physics and determination that students should enjoy their learning are increasing motivation and boosting self-confidence. High-quality experimental resources and skilled use of interactive whiteboards provide stimulating and effective learning opportunities.

158. Leadership and management are very good. All aspects of the provision are very well organised. The chosen syllabus, one that has a large ICT component, meets the needs of the students very well. Support for inexperienced colleagues is excellent.
159. In contrast to the national picture, where 20 per cent of the entry for physics is female, the uptake at this school is much lower. In recent years, no girls have taken A-level. The present situation is better; there is one girl in Year 13 and three in Year 12. The recently appointed female teacher of physics is providing an excellent role model and the head of department is doing everything possible to encourage more girls to take this nationally important subject.
160. Students whose weak mathematical skills hamper their understanding of parts of the AS level course are absorbing a disproportionate amount of personal tuition. Despite the extra help, some do not complete the course successfully. Their presence can compromise the progress of the whole class. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the standards attained. The potential for further gains is good.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Teaching is very good.
- Achievement in lessons is very good.
- Resources in the library are insufficient.

#### **Commentary**

161. Standards at the end of year 13 are broadly average. A-level results have been very variable, both in number of entries and grades awarded. There were no entries in 2004, but 2003 results, though well below average at A and B grades, showed everyone gaining an A to E pass. Value-added in examination results is satisfactory. In work seen in Years 12 and 13, standards are average overall, but with current Year 12 working at a higher level than previous Year 12 groups. They had higher attainment on entry to the sixth form and show the potential in lessons to reach higher standards than Year 13. Long-term achievement is yet to match that seen in lessons, which is very good.
162. Students show a good knowledge of geographical processes and are able to make links between those processes and resulting patterns in both human and physical geography. They have the vocabulary and understanding to explain complex ideas and work is well recorded in note form and essays. Students build on previous work in Years 7 to 11 and use a range of statistical methods to improve the value of fieldwork and coursework, as seen in investigations of Oxford's development. Students use ICT resources in research, whilst being aware of the risks of such research. They think independently and are able to weigh a variety of factors and present reasonable judgements and conclusions, as seen in Year 13 work on China.
163. Students are very positive in their lessons and when discussing their work. They think that they are sufficiently challenged and that the work gives them confidence. The majority embarked on the course because they liked geography, and they still do. Of twenty who started the AS course in 2003 only two have left. Everyone feels that they can keep up with the work and they appreciate the fieldwork and the training in statistical analysis. They think they have very good teachers.
164. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are well-planned and presented with expertise and enthusiasm. Good use is made of PowerPoint presentations and students are attentive and participate well. They develop a very good knowledge of examination skills and are

prepared to research topics well in homework. They appreciate the importance of what they are doing. There is a strong expectation that they will think for themselves and they work hard. The teachers' good knowledge enables them to follow up points in depth and introduce students to more complex ideas, as seen in work on the effect of pebble size on beach slopes. There is strong encouragement to use a range of resources, but the sixth form library urgently needs to be updated.

165. Leadership and management are very good. A new team with skills as examiners is raising standards and setting high targets for future success. Motivation is high and attitudes are mature, leading to good levels of improvement since the last inspection.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology, Product design**

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

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

- Teaching is good and leading to students' increasing confidence.
- Despite some students beginning the course with GCSE grades lower than expected for an A-level course, they are adjusting well to its demands and making sound progress.
- Students have no opportunity to experience computer-aided design and manufacturing processes.

#### **Commentary**

166. This recently established course will be examined at A-level for the first time in 2005. Consequently there are no prior results from which to draw comparisons. AS level results for present Year 13 students were below average and, at the time, students were not given a full analysis of their strengths and weaknesses.
167. Standards for Year 13 students are average. The new head of department has identified weaknesses and has targeted teaching and resources to strengthen knowledge and understanding of examination technique. Standards ranged widely in Year 13 work. In general, students do not have a well-developed understanding of the design process and this leads to some simplistic design briefs and subsequent evaluations. Some students use a limited range of sources for research material, which results in varied quality and depth. Students do not have access to computer-aided design and manufacturing resources. ICT in general is not used widely enough, either as a research tool or to improve the presentation of folders.
168. The standards reached by Year 12 students at this early stage in the course are average. Students have entered the course from a wide background of technology experiences. Some have much lower GCSE results than would normally be expected for Alevel work. Good teaching has helped students to adapt readily from GCSE work to Alevel expectations and they are now more aware of what is required of them and are making satisfactory progress; their achievement is in line with expectations. Higher-attaining students can use freehand sketches as an effective means of communicating and developing design ideas. Lower attainers are beginning to lift the quality of their work above that expected at GCSE level.
169. Teaching is good and Year 13 students are appreciative of the clear structure and direction it is providing. Lessons are taught at a brisk pace and emphasis is placed on the need for students to plan their time and effort carefully and work to deadlines. Students receive good, individual help and advice and they are being taught techniques to improve their independent learning skills. Good assessment and tracking procedures have been introduced and students receive good information on performance and progress. As yet, these procedures have not provided a clear understanding of target grades. Although not all students intend to pursue a

design-related career on leaving the sixth form, all are positive about the benefits of the course to their personal development.

170. Leadership and management are good. The newly appointed head of department has made a good start in overcoming the shortcomings in resources and accommodation. He has a clear understanding of what is required to raise standards and a sound plan for development.

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

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well as a result.
- ICT is used imaginatively to extend students' work and develop their ideas.
- Leadership and management are very good, and there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.
- The accommodation is cramped, and storage facilities are inadequate.

#### **Commentary**

171. Standards in Year 13 are well above average. Students' achievement is very good. Their personal studies are very strong because their research into art movements and ideas, such as the impact of music on painting, is very thorough and very attractively presented. They also produce beautiful paintings on silk, with fluid lines and transparent colours, based on the study of the art of non-western cultures. Their large, freestanding paintings, which explore the techniques of artists such as Vincent Van Gogh, are decorative and colourful. In addition, their sketchbook work is lively, and their skills in observation work develop rapidly.
172. Results in the Alevel examinations in 2003 were well above average. They were similar in 2004. Students usually do much better than expected in their art and design considering their standards when they begin their courses in Year 12.
173. Standards in Year 12 are well above average. Although students are in the first few weeks of their course, they are doing better than expected in their current project. Their composition work is developing rapidly, and their still-life paintings are realistic and very effective. In addition, students use ICT very imaginatively, using sunburst effects to enhance the play of candlelight, or swirling colours and patterns together to produce attractive designs. In the AS examinations in 2003, results are well above average. In 2004, results fell a little, although the students that took the course did better than expected considering their GCSE grades. In recent years the great majority of students who begin the course finish it, and retention is good.
174. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are particularly skilled at giving very good individual advice, which helps students to develop their own ideas, and makes the most of their strengths. For example, with a Year 13 group, the teacher spent most of the lesson talking intently to each student in turn, listening to their views, then asking questions which drew out their ideas. Discussions were lively and wide-ranging, and very focused on improving the standard of each student's particular piece of work. This approach produced very high levels of interest, students were absorbed in their own work, and learning was very good as a result. However, the teaching rooms themselves are cramped, and storage is inadequate. This makes it difficult for students to work on a larger scale, or spread their work out to review their ideas.

175. Leadership and management are very good. Examination results have improved in recent years, and standards of work are now well above average. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching and learning has improved considerably, and students' achievement is now very good. Improvement since the previous inspection is therefore very good.

## **Drama**

Provision in drama is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good.
- Students make very good progress.
- Resources are unsatisfactory.
- Enrichment is very good.

## **Commentary**

176. Results in the A-level examination in 2004 were very good. All four students entered obtained grades A to C. Because of staffing problems, only one student completed the AS course and obtained a grade A. A similar range of standards was seen during the inspection. Currently, standards match national ones, but given their starting point, this represents very good achievement in both Year 12 and Year 13, and there is some outstanding achievement in Year 13. Students have average abilities in dramatic skills, with weaknesses in their use of space, grouping, body language and variety of voice inflection. All students are conscientious in their approach to research, are committed to the wide demands made on them by the subject, and are sufficiently open minded to benefit from potential opportunities as these arise.

177. Teaching is very good, and some is excellent. Teachers have well-developed diagnostic abilities, are skilled in the craft of recognising and developing potential, and employ a range of strategies which, without being intrusive, build positively on even the most tentative progress. Students are eager to grasp these opportunities. In one excellent lesson, they made rapid progress as a result of being offered a host of ways of exploring the impact of different mood, tone and pitch of voice, and speed of delivery.

178. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Both members of staff are recent appointments, and department documentation is under review. A very good start has been made to putting into place an appropriate scheme of work and assessment system. The department will benefit imminently from new premises. It has at present a serious shortage of appropriate furniture and stage props, and there is no provision for multi-media composition or performance from which sixth form courses might be developed.

179. The department organises a wide programme of visits to professional performances, and undertakes an extensive series of school events and activities.



## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

### Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- With the exception of last year, when only one candidate took the subject, the percentage of candidates gaining top grades at A-level has been good.
- Numbers taking the subject at AS level have increased dramatically.
- There is exemplary use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.
- Too many students are ungraded at AS level.
- A disappointing number continue to A-level.

### Commentary

180. Standards at the end of Year 13 are above average. Students achieve well. The number of students gaining A or B grades at A-level is generally above average, though in 2004 there was only one candidate. Results at AS level this year, with a much larger cohort, were below average for previous years. Some of the higher-attaining students did not gain the grades of which they are capable and an unacceptable number of students were ungraded.
181. Students in both Years 12 and 13 show appropriate knowledge and understanding of physiological and psychological factors affecting performance; they make sound links with previous learning. In a Year 12 session, students were developing an understanding of the defining characteristics of play, sport, recreation and physical education. With promptings from the teacher, they were able to make appropriate distinctions. In Year 13, students showed a positive approach to learning about factors impacting upon the development of elite performance. In both lessons, students drew on personal experience to relate theory to practical examples. However, some students clearly do not read around the topic independently prior to teaching sessions.
182. Achievement in AS and Alevel reflects the amount of independent work put in by individual students. Some are over reliant on the teacher and the approach to work in Year 13 by some students is too passive.
183. Teaching is generally good, with many examples of very good teaching. Subject knowledge is good and enables teachers to provide stimulating examples to illustrate their teaching. In the very good sessions, pace is maintained throughout and questions are directed at individuals, always encouraging the link between theory, practice and previous learning. Teachers know their students well and direct questions appropriately to enhance learning and test their knowledge of the topic. Teachers' expectations are often high, but insufficient demands are put on students to learn independently, especially in the form of preparatory or research work. Little use is made of extension tasks for the higher-attaining students.
184. Leadership and management are good, although the lack of a dedicated theory base undermines teaching and learning. Lessons take place in a variety of classrooms in different parts of the school. In addition to putting the teachers under pressure transporting resources, this also hinders the ability of students to conduct research by having access to resources, journals and other documentation.
185. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. There is no recreational physical education programme, but some well-motivated students find a place for physical activity in their programmes. A growing number of sixth-form students make a valuable contribution by assisting teaching staff in coaching and administrative duties.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	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	3	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>3</b>
Attendance	3	2
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well pupils learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	2	3
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).*