

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **NONSUCH HIGH SCHOOL for GIRLS**

Cheam

LEA area: Sutton

Unique reference number: 103008

Headteacher: Mrs G.D.Espejo

Lead inspector: Ms Sheila Browning

Dates of inspection: 6 – 9 December 2004

Inspection number: 268864

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (selective)  
School category: Foundation  
Age range of pupils: 11-18  
Gender of pupils: Female  
Number on roll: 1220

School address: Ewell Road  
Cheam  
Sutton  
Surrey  
Postcode: SM3 8AB

Telephone number: 020 8394 1308  
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body  
Name of chair of governors: Mrs Donna Evans

Date of previous inspection: 23 November 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Nonsuch High School for Girls is a large selective school, with 902 girls up to Year 11 and a sixth form of 318 students. This vastly oversubscribed high achieving school with specialist science college status is surrounded by some affluent housing but draws from a wider catchment than the relatively privileged area of Sutton. The proportion of girls eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. About 36 per cent of the total roll, are from a minority ethnic background and some 30 languages are spoken. Very few girls are learning English as an additional language and no girls are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The proportion of girls having English as an additional language has almost doubled since the last inspection. The proportion of girls with special educational needs is well below the national average as are the numbers of girls with a statement of educational needs. The range of special educational needs includes social, emotional and behavioural and physical and other learning needs. The school recruits its students from the top 25 per cent of the ability range. Students' attainment on entry is therefore very high. The school is involved in a number of initiatives and currently has achieved various awards such as Beacon status, Sportsmark Award, Schools Achievement Award and Education Extra – Distinction.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1510	Sheila Browning	Lead inspector	Design and technology support
11414	Ann Bennett	Lay inspector	
1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	English English (post 16)
6138	Keith Page	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (post 16)
30597	Robina Howells	Team inspector	Biology (post 16) Physics (post 16)
5241	Dr Cynthia Millband	Team inspector	Science Chemistry (post 16)
18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Information and communication technology (post 16)
8552	Wallis Hart	Team inspector	Design and technology Work related learning
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art and design
1782	Andrew Lyons	Team inspector	Business Education
22458	Gerald Mc Ginn	Team inspector	Citizenship History
10666	Patricia Wheeler	Team inspector	History (post 16)
20497	Vernon Williams	Team inspector	Geography Geography (post 16)
11864	Michael Lafford	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French (post 16) Language provision
8622	Heather Housden	Team inspector	Physical education (post 16)
10895	David Wasp	Team inspector	Religious education Religious education (post 16)
8139	Barbara Johnstone	Team inspector	Music
21899	Gillian Lawson	Team inspector	Special educational needs
33623	Clifford Walker	Team inspector	English as an additional language Modern foreign languages support
3162	Phillip O'Neil	Team inspector	Psychology (post 16) support English
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a very good school with many excellent features.** It is a very high achieving school with an excellent ethos. Standards are very high and have shown continued improvement. Teaching is very good and students achieve highly. Students are proud of the school and parents are very supportive. The school provides a very good education for all its students with excellent inclusion. Sixth form provision is very good. Enrichment opportunities are very good. Leadership and management by the headteacher are excellent. Leadership and management of the school are very good. Staff share a very clear vision of how to develop the school further. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are very high. Examination results show continued improvement and are very high. Standards in chemistry are not high enough in the sixth form.
- Achievement is very good because of the very good teaching. Students are enthusiastic and are very well motivated.
- Enrichment opportunities are very good.
- Visionary leadership from the headteacher is the driving force in moving the school forward.
- Links with parents, the community and colleges are excellent.
- Support, advice and guidance for students are excellent.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in a racially harmonious school with excellent relationships and behaviour.

The school has made very good progress since it was last inspected in November 1998. The school has won many educational awards and has recently acquired specialist science status. The six key issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed. The school now teaches the full National Curriculum for information and communication technology and standards have risen considerably. The progress of students with special educational needs is very good and individual education plans support their needs well. Communication with parents has vastly improved. Parents have clear information about what is being taught, and annual reports are very good. The school development plan is costed, monitored, evaluated and implemented systematically. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and all other statutory requirements are met. Standards and teaching have shown continued improvement and strengths in other areas of the school's work have been built upon.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A*	A*	A*	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	N/A	N/A	A*	

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

**The achievement of students overall is very good.** On entry to the school students' attainment is far above expected standards. In Year 9, standards are very high. For the last three years results in national tests in English, mathematics, and science, have been very high (in the top five per cent) when compared with all schools nationally. This represents sustained achievement. Current standards are broadly similar. They are very high in some subjects, such as English, mathematics, science, art and design, history, design and technology, modern foreign languages. Standards are very high in religious education when benchmarked against the locally agreed syllabus. Standards

are well above average in geography, information and communication technology and music, and are above average in physical education.

GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than that seen nationally and have been consistently very high. The unvalidated performance data for 2004 is similarly high at the end of Years 9, 11 and post 16. Current standards are similar and students are achieving very well. Inspection evidence indicates very high achievement in the majority of subjects, including English, mathematics, art and design, history, modern foreign languages, Latin, music and religious education, and very good achievement in science, geography, design and technology and physical education and good achievement in information and communication technology.

In the sixth form overall standards are very high and students achieve very well in relation to their previous results. In subjects inspected in depth, students' achievements were very good in a number of subjects. In chemistry standards are not high enough. Overall, realistic targets were set for 2004 and these were exceeded. **The school places great emphasis on providing for the personal development of its students, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.** Students' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Attendance is very good. Punctuality is very good in the main school and good in the sixth form.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education provided by the school is very good and it is socially inclusive. The significant amount of excellent, very good and good teaching is a major factor in students' very good achievement as they progress through the school.** Students are enthusiastic and are very well motivated. Provision for students with English as an additional language, those with special educational needs, and those gifted and talented is very good. The school makes very good provision for its students' care, welfare, health and safety. Accommodation is much improved and resources are good. Links with parents and the local community are excellent, and those with other schools very good.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Leadership and management are very good with inspirational leadership by the headteacher.** The leadership of senior managers is very good. Governance is excellent. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher is the driving force for innovation whilst ensuring continued improvement in all aspects of the school's work. She continues to build on the notable strengths of the school and has clearly identified areas for future improvement. The school is organised and managed most efficiently. The highly skilled governing body fulfils its role successfully and meets statutory requirements.

## PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The vast majority of parents and students take a very positive view of most aspects of the school's work. However, of those returning the parental questionnaire, a few considered they were not kept well informed about their daughter's progress. Inspectors judged that parents are now kept well informed. Parents are very satisfied with the school's work, in particular the high standards their daughters are enabled to achieve. The school is very responsive to parental concerns, and has been consulting them with an open agenda for improvement. Students were very positive about most aspects of the school.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in chemistry to the level of other subjects and improve the management of the subject.

## SIXTH FORM

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The sixth form offers its students a very good education.** Standards are very high. Students enjoy the sixth form and achieve highly. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Leadership and management are excellent. The sixth form gives very good value for money. It has increased considerably in the last few years. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Results at A/AS-level are consistently very high with the exception of chemistry.
- The very good teaching enables students to achieve highly.
- The sixth form is exceptionally well led and managed.
- The climate for learning is excellent. The curriculum and enrichment opportunities are very good and the school is socially inclusive.
- Students value the support they receive and demonstrate considerable enthusiasm, a strong sense of independence and mature attitudes to their studies. They actively contribute to the life of the school as a whole.
- Students receive excellent academic support and guidance in relation to their on-going studies and in their applications to universities.

### 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 pupils achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision for English is <b>excellent</b> . Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Students are interested and engaged. Both results in examinations and in work seen in lessons confirm very high standards. Provision for French is <b>very good</b> . Standards are well above average. Students achieve well as a result of very good teaching.
Mathematics	Provision for mathematics is <b>very good</b> . Standards in examinations are high. The very good match of teacher expertise to the curriculum ensures very good teaching and learning. Excellent classroom relationships considerably increase achievement
Science	Provision for biology is <b>very good</b> . Standards are well above average. Teaching is good or very good. Provision for physics is <b>very good</b> . Standards are well above average. The students work hard and enjoy studying. Teaching is good or very good. Provision for chemistry is <b>unsatisfactory</b> . Teachers have high expectations of what students are capable of achieving, but have yet to plan and deliver ideas in ways that result in high performances and creditable achievement.
Humanities	Provision for geography is <b>very good</b> . Standards of work are very high. Very good teaching results in very good learning. Students are very well motivated and achieve very well. Provision for history is <b>excellent</b> . Examination results are very high. Teaching and learning are very good. Students achieve very well. Provision for religious education is <b>excellent</b> . Students achieve very high standards. Teaching is excellent. Teachers provide very strong support for students' learning. Provision for psychology is <b>very good</b> . Students achieve very well as a result of teaching that is stimulating and very well organised. Students are very good learners and work very productively.

Information and communication technology	Provision for information and communication technology is <b>good</b> . Students achieve well as the result of good teaching.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision for physical education is <b>very good</b> . Very good teaching and learning leads to high standards: examination results are well above national averages.
Business	Provision for business education is <b>very good</b> . Very good teaching encourages students to work hard and achieve very high standards. Information and communication technology is insufficiently developed for students to obtain transferable skills.

*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**

Attitudes to learning and behaviour continue to be strengths of the sixth form. Students receive excellent advice, support and guidance on career opportunities and entry to university. Careful induction procedures ensure that students are well informed about the choice of A level courses. Students are fully involved in school activities and excellent opportunities are also provided through the community and national initiatives. Reporting and review procedures are excellent.

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

**Leadership and management are excellent.** There is a strong commitment to improve the provision and staff share this. The school's expectations of high academic success and personal development are reinforced in the sixth form. Sixth form students are encouraged to contribute to school life in all its aspects and they do so most successfully. Students' views and involvement are highly valued by the school. Retention rates are very high reflecting the popularity of the sixth form. There are sharply focused and efficient systems in place to monitor effectiveness and to support students. The curriculum is very good and it meets the expectations of its students and parents. The sixth form is cost effective and it is one of the strengths of the school.

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

A significant number of sixth form students indicated that they are very happy and supportive of school. They value highly the support and challenge they receive.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Year 9 national test results remain consistently very high. Students in Year 11 and in the sixth form reach very high standards and they achieve exceptionally well. Students with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and those gifted and talented make very good progress.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement overall is very high because of the very good teaching; students are eager to learn and are very well motivated.
- In Year 9, current standards of work are very high in English and mathematics and in most other subjects.
- In Year 11 and in the sixth form, students attain far above expected standards in most subjects and students achieve highly.
- In the sixth form students do not achieve as well in chemistry in comparison to other subjects.

#### Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	41.3 (42.3)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	47.3 (47.1)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	42.8 (43.1)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 180 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

1. Results are very high in comparison to all schools nationally in English, mathematics and science in 2003. For the last four years results in national tests in English, mathematics and science have been very high (in the top five per cent) when compared to all schools nationally. This represents sustained achievement. Comparative figures for 2004 are similarly high. In comparison with schools with a similar percentage of students eligible for free school meals standards are above average and their achievement is good. Value-added indicators show that in Years 7 to 9 almost all students achieved above average compared with their prior attainment and ability. Results were very similar to those at the time of the last report. The unvalidated data for 2004 indicates results in English, mathematics and science continue to rise at both the expected level and at the higher levels.
2. Standards seen in the inspection in Years 7 to 9 are broadly similar. They are very high in some subjects, such as English, mathematics, art and design, history, design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education. Standards are well above average in science, citizenship, geography, information and communication technology and music, and are above average in physical education.
3. The latest year for which national comparisons are validated for GCSE results is 2003. GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than that seen nationally. The proportion of students achieving five GCSE grades A\* to C and 5+ A\* to G grades has been consistently very high. The average points score in 2003, based on each student's best eight results was very high compared to all schools nationally. In comparison with similar schools, the average points score was well above average. When compared with the same students' standards by the end of Year 9, results were also well above average. These results represented very high achievement in Years 10 and 11 and students far exceeded expected standards overall.

Subjects where performance was particularly high in comparison to similar schools nationally included English, mathematics, religious education, geography and art and design. There was little difference in the performance of students from different ethnic groups (the ethnic profile of some groups being too small for comparisons to be valid). Unvalidated school results for 2004 indicate an increase in the percentage of students gaining 5+ A\* to C and 5+ A\* to G grades.

4. Current standards are similar and students are achieving very well. Inspection evidence indicates very high achievement in the majority of subjects, including English, mathematics, art and design, history, modern foreign languages, Latin, music and religious education, with very good achievement in science, citizenship, geography, design and technology and physical education and good achievement in information and communication technology, and in. The school continues to maintain the very high standards reported in the last inspection.
5. The achievements of students with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and gifted and talented students are very good throughout the school. Students with special educational needs achieve well above average because of very effective teaching, useful structures and very good communication systems to support the teaching and strong parental support. Students with English as an additional language achieve as well as other students. But none are at early stages of learning English and only a few are regarded as needing or being likely to benefit from language support.

**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	99 (98)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	57.2 (55.9)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 149 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

**Sixth form**

**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	98.3 (98.7)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	55.6 (68.2)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per student	411.5 (435.4)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 142 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

6. In 2003, results at AS and A-level examinations were very high compared to all schools nationally. A level results based on students' average point scores, placed the school in the top five per cent of schools across the country. The unvalidated 2004 performance data is similarly high. Standards were very high and achievement was consistently high with the exception of chemistry where results were below average. In religious education, achievement is significantly higher than performance in this subject nationally and shows a significant positive value added residual based on published data analysis. Achievement in history and music remains consistently high. Overall, realistic targets were set for 2003 and these were exceeded. Retention rates are very high and virtually all students complete their A-level courses.
7. Inspection evidence reflects the examination performance overall. Students achieve very well in relation to their previous results. In subjects inspected in depth, students' achievements are very good in a number of subjects. Standards are very high in English, geography, history, physics, religious education, and in business studies. In chemistry standards are average.

## Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is very good throughout the school. Students show excellent commitment to their academic work, behaviour and involvement in school life. The school makes outstanding provision for their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships across the school are excellent.
- Attendance and punctuality are very good.
- Students show excellent attitudes towards learning and behave exceptionally well.
- Students make the very most of all the opportunities they are given.
- Inclusive, encouraging school ethos makes outstanding provision for students' personal development.

### Commentary

8. Attendance is well above average, when compared with other schools nationally, because students are keen and are well supported by their parents. The school is using its computerised registration very well to monitor attendance, and was able to identify the reasons for a decrease last year. There is very little unauthorised absence and punctuality in the mornings is very good.

#### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (per cent)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0	School data	0.0
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

9. The students at Nonsuch show excellent attitudes towards learning, and make the very most of all the opportunities they are given. Students' attitudes are excellent: they are proud to be in the school and know that they contribute to their own learning. They are courteous, thoughtful, work hard and co-operate with each other. Although younger students are anxious not to give wrong answers they rise to challenges and will take risks and this makes their learning enjoyable. Students with special educational needs make very noticeable progress in the development of independence, confidence and self-esteem. They have secure relationships with each other and with the staff and flourish in the strong, caring and motivating ethos of the school.
10. Behaviour is excellent, in spite of a small number of fixed term exclusions that reflect broken school rules. The exclusions resulted in effective behaviour modification. There is a total absence of anti-social behaviour and a mutual respect and trust between teachers and students. Relationships are excellent throughout the school. The school community is vibrant and inclusive and students learn how to be a valued participant.

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of students on role	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	678	4	0
White – Irish	14	0	0
White – any other White background	61	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	38	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	28	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	82	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	31	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	110	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	0	0
Black or Black British – African	16	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	29	0	0
Any Other ethnic group	26	0	0
Parent / student preferred not to say	31	0	0
Information not obtained	0	0	0
Total	1171	0	0

11. In lessons students learn far more than curriculum content. They gain confidence by making presentations that they have researched. They plan and deliver assemblies with confidence. Displays show a wide range of interests and concerns, from fair trade to women's rights. They are encouraged to participate in many activities outside lessons, and also feel free to initiate others, building their self-esteem and confidence. Students respect each other's faiths and cultures, organising and participating in events that celebrate these. The school helps them develop into reliable, thinking young women whilst being stretched academically, and in this way makes outstanding provision for students' personal development. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.

**Sixth form**

12. Attendance is well above average and punctuality is good. The school monitors both well and this has led to improved punctuality.
13. Attitudes to learning and behaviour continue to be strengths of the school. All students have opportunities to participate in community activities. Older students expect to be more involved in school activities. Subject departments frequently use sixth formers as mentors for younger students. They are confident and committed and undertake routine tasks whilst using their freedom to innovate because they are trusted to start and to run clubs and societies for themselves and younger students. For example the new gospel choir will be singing their own arrangements both at Salvation Army carol services and at school assemblies.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The curriculum is good and enrichment opportunities are very good with high levels of student participation. Accommodation and resources are good overall. The quality of care is very good and links with parents and the community enhance provision considerably.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school including the sixth form. Overall assessment is used very well but there are a few inconsistencies between subjects. Students learn exceptionally well in response to the very good teaching they receive. They told inspectors that they appreciated and enjoyed the challenges set.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a significant amount of excellent, very good and good teaching which supports the excellent climate for learning.
- Teachers have an excellent level of expertise in their subjects and they ensure that students know precisely how to improve their work. Assessment is used very well to show students how to improve.
- Teachers set very high expectations and challenge for students and this significantly improves standards. Students respond very positively to the high expectations set.
- Excellent classroom relationships considerably increase achievement.
- Students have insufficient access to information and communication technology to support their learning.
- Teaching in citizenship is good overall, although there is inadequate monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in tutorial periods.

### Commentary

14. The table below highlights the fact that one in ten lessons observed during the inspection was excellent, over half were very good and better, a quarter were good and better and almost all were satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 197 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
21 (11%)	104 (53%)	48 (24%)	23 (12%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

15. Particular strengths of teaching are: teachers' excellent level of expertise in their subjects, their enthusiasm and enjoyment making many lessons successful, very high expectations, which extend students' learning, focused and direct use of assessment to improve learning, excellent relationships and a very good range of teaching and learning methods that capture students' interest and motivate them. Although most teachers make very good use of new technologies, such as interactive white boards and computer technology, access for students' use is insufficient to support learning in several subjects.
16. The very best teaching secures excellent learning. Teachers are confident to use a full range of teaching styles and explore methods to improve student performance. Teaching successfully focuses on developing students' independent learning skills. Students demonstrate secure research skills and apply their knowledge most effectively. They articulate their findings confidently through class discussion and when giving presentations. Very good

recapitulation keeps the students working to their full potential so that new ideas and concepts are learned and understood at a good pace. Lesson planning is often of an exemplary standard, with carefully thought out work to enhance learning. The use of time and resources, and the development of students' key skills are all very good. Teaching is very good because relationships are so very positive. Students respond eagerly to the challenging activities set. They are attentive, concentrate very hard, listen well and are highly motivated and their productivity is very good.

17. Teachers are skilful at knowing what helps students learn. Students are encouraged to actively participate in their learning. Teachers set the foundations for a good learning ethic early on. They indicate clearly how students can improve their work and gain higher marks. They stress the importance of: reading questions carefully, interrogating and analysing text and data succinctly, developing accurate note taking and effective enquiry skills. Teachers combine preparing students for examinations sensibly, with constant reminders about coursework or assignment deadlines. As a result, students take responsibility for their own learning seriously. Homework tasks are set regularly and successfully consolidate and extend learning.
18. The very few students on the special educational needs register achieve very well and reach standards that are similar to those of their fellow students. The school has established useful structures, including effective individual education plans which identify methods to support students' learning and which enable them to have effective access to very good teaching. Students' targets, learning methods and progress are regularly monitored and reviewed. Work is carefully tailored to students' specific individual learning needs. These are improvements since the last inspection.
19. Most teachers are sensitive to the needs of students with English as an additional language and provide appropriate tasks for these students. The support provided through the English additional language club and self-access materials is satisfactory. Those who are gifted and talented build well on their skills and knowledge because of the extensive enrichment programme and high level of challenge provided.
20. The amount of data analysis the school undertakes is impressive. Results of national tests and examination data are interrogated thoroughly and reviewed by ethnic groups, sets, and individual teachers and by individual responses to examination questions. The outcomes are used to raise standards and improve the curriculum, teaching and learning. In the sixth form particularly results are considered against prior performance and predicted grades this is very good practice. However, the use of assessment is inconsistent in a few subjects. Mostly students are aware of how they can improve. Work is thoroughly and constructively marked, with very clear comments on how to further improve.
21. The senior leadership team has made a considerable impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Training and professional development opportunities for shared good practice are part of a regular cycle that includes all staff, monitoring teaching within and across different subjects. This shared good practice has produced very good teaching.

### **Sixth form**

22. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' expertise is well matched to the demands of the curriculum at AS and A-level. Teachers have high expectations and their very effective questioning stimulates the development of ideas and extends students knowledge and understanding. Very occasionally, as in chemistry, weak planning skills rooted in narrow teaching methods result in teacher-centred lessons, which depress the quality of learning. More often students are frequently encouraged to provide demonstrations and explanations of their work, research and ideas.
23. Students are active and independent learners. They have developed the confidence to put forward their views and they are expected to take ownership of their learning, and as a result

they are very keen to be actively engaged. The excellent relationship between teachers and students is a strength of this well integrated school.

24. Students' progress is monitored rigorously and students benefit from very thorough and constructive marking. Tracking of students as they progress through their studies is a real strength of teaching. Any underachievement is monitored well to ensure high achievement and the best grades for each student. This results in well-motivated, lively and interested students who have the capacity to work very well independently.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides a good curriculum with very good opportunities for enrichment. The school is well staffed, has a very good number of support staff and is well resourced. The accommodation is good overall for the delivery of the National Curriculum and religious education.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Modern foreign languages provide a very wide choice of study.
- There is insufficient time for information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 7 to 9 and insufficient computer resources for learning throughout the school.
- A broad range of academic subjects is offered to GCSE level.
- Not all students get their preferred option choice in Year 10.
- Provision for gifted and talented students and those with special educational needs and English as an additional language is very good.
- There is an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs and activities.
- Teachers are very well qualified.

## **Commentary**

25. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is good. It includes all the National Curriculum subjects and religious education. The provision in modern foreign languages is flexible and very good; all students start a language in Year 7 and choose a second modern foreign language or Latin in Year 8. Those who wish to study just one language in Year 10 can take a foundation GCSE in their other language at the end of Year 9. All who did this in 2004 gained GCSE grade C. As a result of insufficient time for ICT in Years 7 to 9 topics are not covered to a depth to allow students to gain the highest levels.
26. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is good. The school provides a broad range of academic subjects at GCSE including separate sciences, astronomy and Greek. However these are not balanced by the provision of any vocational subjects and the school has no plans to offer any. All students take a short course in religious education and information and communication technology that provide valuable additional qualifications. There is a small but significant number of students who wish to study the three separate sciences but cannot do so because timetable arrangements in mathematics prevent this. An effective alternative curriculum is readily provided for the small number of students who have special circumstances such as those who take part in international sport or who are in hospital. The curriculum prepares students well for further education and employment through careers education.
27. In all years, the citizenship programme is well planned and well taught through all subjects on the curriculum. Personal, social and health education is effectively co-ordinated across the school and provides clear guidance on sex education, relationships and drugs education.
28. The provision for gifted and talented students is very good. The school believes that, by reason of the selective entry criteria to the school, all students may have the capability to excel in one or more areas of the curriculum. Subject departments identify those students who demonstrate particular aptitude or talent in their specialist areas. Students are challenged and extended through such opportunities as additional languages, for example Latin and triple

award science and early entry for GCSE in languages and mathematics. The school offers an established and wide-ranging programme of extension opportunities in nearly all departments.

29. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. They are supported very well within the classroom by teachers and with any necessary suitable resources and teaching methods. The school has made vigorous efforts to enable access for students with medical or physical disabilities (PD) and to ensure that all students are fully included in all aspects of school life. Students with PD have good access to physiotherapy and are well supported in their lessons and this enables them rapidly to gain independence and confidence. All have a good understanding of their needs and meet them with sensitivity and skill.
30. Provision for students with English as an additional language is very good. No students are at early stages of language acquisition.
31. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which extend and enhance the taught curriculum. This provision is being broadened in response to requests from students. A wide range of regular clubs is available including, drama, music, sports, critical thinking, Amnesty International, Christian Union, astronomy, debating, and medical societies. Sixth form students also run some of these and many visitors and guest speakers contribute to the rich and varied programme. There are many educational trips including those abroad, for example all of Year 7 can go to France.
32. Accommodation is good. The sports hall and playing fields, the music suite and all classrooms in the new building are very good. When the current building programme is completed, the accommodation for science, design technology, art and drama will have been improved. The school's buildings are exceptionally well maintained assisted by a well-planned programme of renovation. Currently a lift is being installed to give physically disabled users access to all floors.
33. Resources are good. All students are given appropriate textbooks for their use in most subjects, which are well used to promote learning. Despite recent spending on computers there are not enough for the size of the school. As a result access to computers is restricted and students have too few suitable opportunities to practise and extend the skills they have learned in their ICT lessons.
34. Staffing is very good overall and meets the needs of the curriculum very well. The well-qualified specialist teachers teach enthusiastically, resulting in students' very good achievement. The network manager, ICT, science and design and technology technicians contribute well to the smooth running of the school. The librarian and school nurse provide knowledgeable support for students. The administrative staff ensures the efficient running of the school day.

### **Sixth form**

35. A very good range of academic courses is provided, supplemented by very good extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities. Staffing is very good. Resources and accommodation are good.
36. The curriculum is very good and reflects very good curriculum development and innovation. The school concentrates on providing a very good range of AS and A-level courses. The range has improved since the last inspection with the addition of Textiles, Product Design, information and communication technology, physical education and psychology. The latter has proved to be an extremely popular innovation. The statutory requirement for all students to have religious education is now met. Ancient Greek will be offered from September 2005 and the possibility of introducing Science for Public Understanding is under investigation in response to the school's recent acquisition of science specialist status. All students are examined in general studies. Core subjects offer more than one A-level and the content of

many subjects extends learning beyond the AS and A-level syllabuses. A significant number of subjects offer Advanced Extension Awards.

37. The school attracts close to 90 per cent of its Year 11 students into Year 12 and maintains the same ethnic balance. The entry requirements are consistently applied to all students. Students understand that vocational courses are provided in other local post-16 establishments.
38. An effective study skills course, a good two-year general studies course that incorporates aspects of religious education and citizenship and a good PSHE programme that includes careers complement academic courses. All are delivered through seminars and tutorials. Although the study skills course is very good and rated highly by students, the general studies and PSHE provision is not as good as other subjects. Students value the seminar programme but do not think highly of some General Studies lessons, delivered by teachers, and have alternative ideas about their content. During the inspection the quality of general studies varied between very good and unsatisfactory. The school is already planning to examine their quality and progression within Year 13.
39. Seminars and tutorials are effectively used to prepare students and their parents for the demands of for later stages of education including Oxbridge entrance requirements. In 2004 all but one student made an application to higher education.
40. Extra-curricular opportunities are very good and enhance personal and social development. Sixth formers organise themselves to make good use of the sports facilities and lead many of the activities, including those provided for the main school. The recent innovation of a student association has resulted in a substantial increase in the social and fund raising events led and managed by students. The laying down of its constitution enhanced the citizenship provision.
41. Teachers are very well qualified and well matched to the courses they teach. Resources are generally good. Accommodation is good. Students have their own common room and external area to socialise and teaching and tutorial bases are of a good size.

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

The school makes very good provision for its students' care, welfare, health and safety. It provides excellent support and guidance based on monitoring, and involves students very well in the life of the school community and all participate well.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very committed pastoral support.
- Excellent support and guidance.
- Very good provision for students' health and safety.
- Induction arrangements for new students are excellent.
- Students' views and involvement are highly valued.

### **Commentary**

42. The pastoral system remains strong, and the roles of form tutor and head of year very effective. The school has excellent plans to develop this role further to include academic mentoring. Students receive excellent support and guidance from their teachers. Marking is very informative, and assessments and target setting mean that they are clear about their progress and how to improve. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
43. The progress of students with special educational needs is carefully monitored. Annual statutory reviews comply with legal requirements. Individual education plans are detailed with specific and measurable targets and they are reviewed regularly. The school has very good

links with outside agencies and this enables students with special educational needs to receive very effective advice for their future needs.

44. Substantial improvements have been made to health and safety provision since the previous inspection, and this is now very good, with regular reviews and high quality risk assessments undertaken. The school nurse provides good care for those with chronic conditions or who are unwell. Comprehensive arrangements for child protection are in place, and any reported concerns get fast responses, statutory requirements are fully met.
45. Induction arrangements for new students are excellent, and involve Year 7 and Year 9 students at the time of testing and before the new school year begins.
46. Careers advice is good, and developing because good use is being made of new initiatives to strengthen provision. Much of the advice relates to continuing in education, and this is appropriate for these students.
47. The school listens and acts upon students' views and all are able to participate. Informally, students have considerable freedoms to request and initiate, and they find teachers amenable and willing to trust them. More formally, they are surveyed and very recent changes to the school council, and re-introduction of Year councils mean that more students have a voice. One non-staff governor will attend school council meetings, and this lends weight to their deliberations.

### **Sixth form**

48. Students are very confident and self-assured by the time they leave school. Academic mentoring by form tutors is in place in Year 12, and students have found this helpful because they value the discussion time with their tutor. Students also appreciate their interviews with specialist advisors.
49. Students new to the sixth form find it very welcoming because they are allocated a 'buddy' and because tutor groups are rearranged allowing for new friendships to be made.
50. Senior managers are well aware of how hard students work and of the importance of developing provision for social activity and 'fun' outside the curriculum. A whole school survey identified that students want greater social activity in the sixth form. The formation of a sixth form students' association with a social secretary is addressing this issue. Because they respect their teachers, rather than being confrontational, students are putting a thoughtful motion to this council to try to resolve their concerns over the general studies course.

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

The school has excellent communication systems with its parents and increasingly valuable and mutually supportive connections within its community. There are very effective links with other educational establishments.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The provision of information for parents is excellent.
- The school makes an excellent contribution within its community.
- There are very effective links with other schools, colleges and teacher training institutions.

## **Commentary**

51. Parents are very satisfied with the school's work, in particular the high standards their daughters are enabled to achieve. The headmistress deals sensitively with issues they raise, and the staff work together with parents in the students' best interests. The school is very responsive to parents' concerns, and has been consulting them with an open agenda for improvement. As a result, changes are continuing to take place, for example in the timing and duration of parents' consultation evenings. Communication with parents has vastly improved since the previous inspection and now makes exceptional use of electronic means to supplement paper.
52. Many school documents are available to parents on the website, and 80 per cent choose to receive information electronically. Parents have clear information about what is being taught, and annual reports are very good. They give detail about what has been achieved and clear targets for improvement. Parents are being encouraged to support their daughters in managing their own attainment. As this process rolls out across all year groups it should alleviate the concerns of the 17 per cent of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire who did not feel well enough informed about their daughter's progress.
53. Relationships with parents of students with special educational needs are good. Parents value the support they are given and trust the staff. Parents and their daughters attend major events such as annual reviews, individual education plan reviews and school performances. Staff have close relationships with outside agencies so that students and their families have ongoing advice and specialist resources available to them.
54. The school is very outward looking. It pioneered successful partnerships with a private nursery and sports facility and has an increased awareness of the mutual benefits which can be gained by hosting organisations such as the University of the Third Age and the local astronomical society. Students continue to be involved with local charities and organisations. Other schools benefited from the school's subject expertise as a Beacon school, and the specialist school status will increase this further. Many trainee teachers have placements at the school.
55. The academic review system is successfully in place in the sixth form, and students find discussions with their tutor particularly helpful. Students receive excellent support in their university applications and carefully tailored guidance is provided to those choosing other options.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management by the head teacher are excellent. The senior leadership team are a strong cohesive group. The leadership and management of other key staff including heads of department and heads of year is very good. Governance is excellent.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership and management of the headteacher are excellent. The headteacher is determined and innovative.
- Management structures and systems are informed through very effective monitoring and evaluation. Performance management and training are excellent.
- The school continues to build on its many notable strengths.
- Governance is excellent, proactive and well informed.
- The school's commitment to inclusion ensures that all students have every opportunity to achieve their full potential
- The school gives very good value for money.

## Commentary

56. Governance is excellent. The chair of governors brings considerable expertise and insight to the highly skilled governing body. Governors are exceptionally well informed and fulfil their role most successfully. They have a secure knowledge of all aspects of the school, and they use this to inform the decisions they make. Governors have played a significant role in the school gaining its science specialist status. They hold the school to account and ensure that all statutory requirements are met. Governors are extremely effective and dynamic and influence the work of the school and its policies. They promote change and have capitalised on links with the local community, such as the on-site sports centre. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
57. Leadership by the headteacher is excellent. The headteacher continues to build on the notable strengths of the school. She has been the driving force for innovation whilst ensuring continued improvement in all aspects of the school's work. She is an exemplary role model and this is characterised in her visionary, strong, sensitive and inspirational leadership. These qualities are recognised by adults, students and parents alike. She is strenuous in her determination to ensure the best possible provision and the highest achievement for Nonsuch students. She has been motivational in improving staff training and development. Her expectations are very high for all areas of the school and she has led the way to secure the specialist science status with the purpose of improving science provision. With the governors and key staff she has secured external funding for initiatives that can be used to further build on the work of the school.
58. The dedicated and hard working deputies and senior leadership team support the headteacher very well. This strong and cohesive group has contributed significantly to the improvements since the last inspection. Overall, leadership and management are very good. Middle managers are good overall, although they range in effectiveness from excellent to unsatisfactory. Key managers work with commitment for the good of the school and all are well focused on raising standards and the achievement of students.
59. Management is confident and well informed. Administrative support is excellent. The school runs smoothly and is organised very efficiently; excellent routines are clearly established but systems are flexible and responsive. The school improvement plan is rigorously implemented and involves all. Educational priorities are well articulated. Evaluation is analytical, reflective and self-critical. High priority is given to appointing well-qualified staff, developing their skills and deploying them effectively. Performance management is excellent and the school invests considerable time and energy in training and a significant amount takes place in school. The school has a very good induction programme. Non-teaching staff are supported well and included in training opportunities. They make an important and highly valued contribution to the life of the school.
60. The special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) manages the provision for students with special educational needs well. She has a clear vision for the development of the area and monitors students' progress carefully. There has been considerable improvement in this area since the last inspection. Leadership and management of English as an additional language are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has established good communication systems and regular cycles of review of students' progress.
61. The headteacher and staff have a high commitment to achievement and inclusion and provide an excellent work ethos. Examination results are very high and students achieve highly. Teaching and learning are very good. Change for school improvement has been managed very effectively through the gaining of many educational awards and through the work of the many initiatives the school is involved in. The school provides for its students most successfully and maintains its high reputation locally.

62. The bursar is extremely effective, and his innovative use and knowledge of financial systems has secured the school's current healthy financial position. Governors are closely involved in financial management. The principles of best value are followed carefully and designated funds are carefully assigned. The financial status coupled with the very high achievement by students at the end of Year 11 and the sixth form indicates the value for money to be very good.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	£4,326,323	Balance from previous year	£47,154
Total expenditure	£4,206,193	Balance carried forward to the next	£167,284
Expenditure per student	£3,601		

**Sixth form**

63. Leadership and management in the sixth form are excellent. Excellent procedures are used to systematically monitor and support the personal development and attendance of students. The director of sixth form interacts positively with students and interviews them regularly to discuss career and educational aspirations. Very good communications are maintained. Students have created a distinctive and well-organised ethos. The sixth form is very popular and retention rates are very high. It has increased considerably in the last few years to 318 students. The management team has been very successful in achieving a sixth form that is highly valued by the students. They enjoy their education at Nonsuch.
64. The management team has set up excellent tracking and monitoring schemes for student achievement. Subject teachers set rigorous targets, and monitoring of progress and acting on any likely underachievement is highly effective. Priorities for development have been identified for individual subjects in addition to the overall provision. Some priorities such as the performance of students in chemistry have also highlighted areas for development. Such priorities are now being turned into action within the school.

**WORK RELATED LEARNING**

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

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The one-day programme of activities in the context of work, for students in Years 10 and 11, is well planned.
- Leadership is good because development priorities have been well thought through.
- There are good opportunities for transferable skills to develop in work related contexts in many subjects.
- An audit to identify planned activities to support work related learning (WRL) in all subjects, has not been completed.

**Commentary**

65. Standards are above average overall and good for many students. All students have highly developed basic skills and apply them in work related contexts such as business education, commercial product analysis, responsible consumerism, sound recording and evaluation of urban renewal programmes.
66. In the lessons seen the teaching was very good. Students were enthusiastic because they valued the very good business knowledge of the teachers and enthusiastically applied their

own skills to evaluations of both public and private sector enterprise. There was considerable enjoyment especially when they engaged in role-play. The strands of learning through, for and about work are all well covered.

67. Leadership and management are good. The transitional arrangements for the current academic year have been carefully thought through and are based on best advice from outside organizations. Priorities for development have been well identified and funding is allocated for the current year. An audit of subject provision for WRL is about to take place to complement the long experience the school has with work experience provision and good careers advice. The school is in a good position to build upon its current strengths to establish better WRL provision.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4**

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

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

##### **English**

Provision in English is **excellent**.

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

- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Teachers use their excellent knowledge to ensure that students know precisely how to improve their work.
- By the end of Year 11, students are enthusiastic independent learners.
- As a result of the above factors, results in examinations and standards in lessons are very high.
- Standards are very high throughout and achievement is very good.

##### **Commentary**

68. Students enter Year 7 with very high standards of reading and writing. In end of Year 9 test results in 2003, results were very high but only average when compared to similar schools. In 2004, results improved and every pupil attained level 6 or above. The department had analysed results carefully, introduced practice tests and heard the chief marker explain what was required for the highest grades. This very good achievement is seen in the 2003 GCSE results, where almost all students obtained A\*/A's in both English and English Literature. The English results in 2004 were very similar and the English Literature results after an examination board re-mark were close. The work seen in lessons and scrutinies of work was of similar quality. No Year 11 lessons were observed because of mock examinations.
69. Students' achievement is excellent in speaking, listening, reading and writing by the end of Years 9 and 11. They are articulate, ready and able to explain ideas clearly. Students demonstrate excellent reading and writing skills. They read demanding class texts such as 'Jane Eyre', which they do not initially expect to enjoy but appreciate when they have finished. There are very good reading lists and the reading diaries contain substantial and thoughtful reviews. Students write well; their presentation is careful and attractive and they write fluently with a sense of audience and style. The very careful marking that indicates exactly how improvements could be made is a significant factor. In Year 10 lessons, similar excellent listening skills are evident and students give their opinions confidently and with supporting arguments. This helps them develop knowledge and understanding further in the frequent classroom discussions. They collaborate extremely well. Those who attain less well have not acquired the knowledge to support detailed comment. Much of their writing is excellent: imagination and style are evident throughout. The lower attaining students write fluently and accurately but with less flair and enjoyment. Students discuss texts critically, paying close attention to the language. All have very good enquiry and study skills that enable them to work independently.
70. The quality of teaching is excellent. The teachers have excellent knowledge and this is used particularly effectively in marking. The students' very good listening and oral skills develop because the teachers cultivate them in group work and discussion. There is constant challenge in lessons that is shown in the pace, in quick problem solving activities or in questioning that leads to greater understanding. Teachers and students are at ease with each other and co-operation is very good. The emphasis on language and its impact develops analytical skills well. Students who speak English as an additional language benefit from the

stress on language, vocabulary and detailed marking. Students with special educational needs make the same very good progress and receive any extra teacher support they need.

71. The creation of a strong inspirational ethos is an indication of the excellent leadership. Similar qualities of management weld together a large number of very experienced and newly qualified teachers into a very effective team. Issues such as the relatively lower proportion of high assessment test grades have been successfully pursued. Concerns raised in the last inspection report relating to assessment in Years 7 to 9, continuity and progression and use of information and communication technology have been satisfactorily resolved. The literacy co-ordinator has successfully strengthened the provision of literacy across the school. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including theatre workshops, visits and school clubs that are well attended and enjoyed. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, as examination results and the quality of teaching and learning have improved further.

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

72. Students enter the school with very high standards of literacy. These continue to develop in all subject areas. By the end of Year 11, students listen carefully and actively. In discussion, they are confident and fluent but also have regard to other opinions. In mathematics, they explain their ideas to their group or class, and thoughtful discussion is a feature of design and technology lessons. Their general vocabulary is wide and supplemented by the technical terms, which they can use precisely. In a debate, the main speakers argued effectively, used supporting evidence very well and observed the conventions of debating effectively. Comprehension skills are very good and there are no difficulties in understanding in any subject. In many subjects, students are encouraged to write at length and in geography, history, modern foreign languages and religious education, they write for a range of audiences and purposes. Students are very skilled at choosing a style well matched to the activity. In general, their ideas are clearly organised and expressed and they make few mistakes in spelling or grammar. One of the aims of the Latin course is to ensure greater understanding and accuracy in the use of English. That and recent attempts to focus on literacy in most subjects are factors in this very good attainment.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

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

- Standards are very high in all of the languages taught.
- Students' achievement is excellent.
- Teaching is very good.
- Assessment is used well, so that teachers can focus on the needs of students.
- Students have insufficient access to information and communication technology to support their learning.

#### **Commentary**

73. Standards in the 2003 GCSE examinations in French, German and Spanish were very high compared with the national average. In 2004 students who took GCSE German a year early obtained only the highest grades. At the end of Year 9 in teacher assessments all students reached the nationally required standards and most obtained higher levels. The proportion achieving the highest levels has shown an increase over the last three years. In 2004 about thirty fourteen-year-old students entered GCSE at foundation level in one of the languages and all obtained grade C, the maximum achievable in this examination. These were students who had opted not to study the language in Years 10 and 11.

74. Students learn one of three modern languages, French, Spanish or German, from Year 7. After three years, at the age of fourteen, they attain very high standards. All students choose a second modern language, or Latin, from Year 8. In two years, most obtain standards equivalent to the higher National Curriculum levels. Most students write accurately in the languages, demonstrating understanding of present, past and future tenses. Those who are learning Latin have acquired a very sound understanding of grammar and syntax and translate challenging passages into English with accuracy. Students who are learning French, German and Spanish have very well developed oral and listening skills because teachers make the maximum use of the languages for classroom instructions and explanations.
75. By the age of sixteen, standards in all of the languages, including Latin, are very high. Students' written work is accurate and they show that they can write at length. Year 10 students demonstrate high-level oral and listening skills. This is particularly evident amongst those students who are intending to take GCSE German a year early, at the end of Year 10.
76. Teaching and learning in modern foreign languages, and in Latin, are very good. During the inspection, some excellent practice was observed. The high quality teaching combines with the students' strong motivation to produce excellent achievement in all the languages and across both key stages. Teachers have very high expectations of the students' capabilities. This is particularly evident in the learning of second languages in Years 7 to 9 and when students are prepared for early entry to GCSE and AS Level examinations in German. From Year 7 students expect French, German and Spanish to be used routinely throughout lessons and this contributes strongly to their excellent progress in oral and listening skills. Teachers plan their lessons very well and this ensures that lessons usually move at a brisk pace, making effective use of the time. They routinely plan a variety of activities designed to teach and reinforce new material. They then get students to use newly learned vocabulary and structures in context at an early stage. Effective assessment procedures ensure that students with special educational needs, and those whose first language is not English also achieve very well. Homework consistently underpins the work done in lessons.
77. The department, which includes Latin and classical Greek, benefits from excellent leadership and management. This has ensured that curriculum planning is in place for all languages and that there are sound assessment procedures, which enable teachers and students to be aware of attainment and achievement. These procedures are backed up by detailed evaluations of examination and test results. Marking is consistently constructive and supportive and students are told what they need to do to improve. The department has been very successful in ensuring that all the languages, French, German, Spanish and Latin, are perceived to hold equal status. Information and communication technology is underused to support learning in languages although students have access to the department's website to help with homework and individual learning. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

### **Overall language provision**

78. The breadth of the language curriculum is a strength of the school. French, German Spanish and Latin are taught in Years 7 to 9. Of these languages students learn two. Students can then take their languages to GCSE and can add classical Greek if they wish. All of these languages are currently available in the sixth form. Learning is well supported by lunchtime and after-school clubs and study sessions. Students are given opportunities to visit France, Germany and Spain while some of those studying Latin recently went on a successful visit to Italy. A trip to Greece is at the planning stage. Students also go to language related venues in London.
79. All lessons observed were characterised by the purposeful engagement of the students. This, along with the vibrant teaching, has resulted in very high achievement in all of the languages. The languages department has excellent potential to improve provision still further.
80. Latin and classical Greek are led and managed as part of the languages department. Latin is introduced as an option in Year 8, as an alternative to a second modern foreign language. It

has proved to be a popular choice, particularly in the current Year 8 year group. Students have the opportunity to choose Greek from Year 10. Both subjects are available through to A Level. The success of Latin has been a strength of the department. This success has resulted from some excellent, imaginative teaching, which ensures that Latin makes a strong contribution to the students' knowledge of classical history and to their deeper understanding of English and other languages.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are very high compared with the national averages for all schools.
- A very well planned curriculum ensures that all students achieve an exceptionally high level of mathematical competence.
- Excellent classroom relationships considerably increase achievement.
- Teachers' very high expectations significantly improve standards.
- Excellent leadership continuously enhances the overall provision.
- Insufficient planning sometimes slows the progress of the school's least able students.

### **Commentary**

81. GCSE examination results in 2003 and since the last inspection in 1998 were very high compared to the national average for all schools. The proportion of students gaining A\* to B is very high compared with national averages. All students achieve at least a grade C at GCSE. The progress and achievement of gifted and talented students and those with high ability is accelerated by curriculum provision that exceeds the expectation of the examination syllabus so they can take the GCSE one year early. Students who have English as an additional language and those identified as having special needs make very good progress.
82. End of Year 9 test results since the last inspection have consistently been very high compared the national average for all schools and high compared with the national average for similar schools. Although the ability of the Year 7 intake is very high the consequence of very good teaching and learning is that all students progress by at least two national curriculum levels between Years 7 and 9. Hence, the rate of improvement in the school's Year 9 test results keeps pace with the national trend.
83. A very well planned curriculum ensures that all students achieve an exceptionally high level of competence in algebraic and geometric knowledge, skill and understanding that impacts on their capability to progress in other areas of the curriculum.
84. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 11 and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers effectively demonstrate and explain new mathematics with the aid of information and communication technology, stimulating scenarios, practical resources and student input. The achievement of all students is maximised by excellent classroom relationships. Teachers have very high expectations that encourage students to willingly take responsibility for their learning. As a result students collaborate to produce high quality outcomes and communicate very well using precise vocabulary. They confidently present ideas to the whole class, discuss outcomes with the teacher and explain what they need to do to improve. Lessons proceed at a good pace and the level of difficulty and complexity of the activity is often challenging. Regular testing accurately informs students of their long-term targets. Some planning, as the result of inconsistent marking, does not take account of how the least able students will access new learning. As a result their progress is sometimes slow and over-reliant on their own determination and use of the excellent class relationships.

85. Leadership is excellent. It is very purposeful. The head of department is exceptionally hard working, determined to add further improvements and extremely clear about how the department will make a substantial contribution to the specialist status of the school. Colleagues are very well supported and since the last inspection the department's self esteem has been raised by the excellent support received from the school's senior leadership and management team. This has led to a highly cohesive team. Most significantly, the excellent matching of national initiatives and the needs of the students to the development of the curriculum and extra curriculum has ensured that mathematics is highly regarded throughout the school.
86. Management is very good. The development plan lays a strong foundation for further raising standards. Teaching and learning are monitored and evaluated in a variety of appropriate ways and many of the department policies are consistently in place. However, the pace of developing mathematics across the whole school curriculum has been slow at a department and whole school level.
87. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The use of assessment has improved and the proportion of very high standards against similar schools has increased. Teaching is now very good and leadership and management are having a significant impact on the overall provision.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

**A Year 7 mixed ability lesson where the teacher used excellent strategies and provided an excellent range of learning activities to extend students' understanding of inverses in order to develop their ability to solve linear equations.**

The use of very well chosen questions set in a real context motivated and challenged every student to successfully calculate answers using all types of numbers. The challenge of knowing only the answer led to enthusiastic discussions in pairs and students finding an excellent range of calculations in words and symbols. The teacher then effectively used flash cards and larger groups of students to represent each step of a calculation. The resulting collaboration between students led to all of them confidently stating their answers and explaining what other groups had to do in order to achieve the previous or subsequent answers. Examples appropriately matched students' ability allowing them to link these oral activities to the recording and solving of linear equations. Many students independently assigned each step of their recording and solution to either a step or group used during the mental/oral activities.

#### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

88. Very good use is made of mathematics in, English, design and technology and music. Good use is made in science, art and design, geography, and information and communication technology. The curriculum for astronomy was also sampled and included, like music and science, several significant references to the use of mathematics. As a result, inspectors, including those whose subjects involved less significant use of mathematics, reported only one instance, in geography, where students' progress was hindered by their lack of mathematical competence.
89. The school has a co-ordinator and a developing policy that includes clear statements concerning the use of calculators and extra curricular activities such as its Numberthon. As part of the schools specialist status action plan, good links have been established with the sciences and the impact is already noticeable in aspects of physics such as electricity. However the school recognises the pace of development has been slow and the use of mathematics to enhance learning across has yet to be maximised.

#### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- High standards and fast progress are strongly underpinned by interesting teaching that swiftly captures students' eagerness to learn and successfully uses it.
- The analysis and judgements of the faculty's performance and achievement of individual students are strong.
- There are very good features of some teaching to share with those who need to explore more stimulating styles.
- Classroom observations are insufficiently sharply focused on aspects of teaching that enrich learning.
- Creative involvement of students in imaginative endings to lessons is limited.

## Commentary

90. Year 9 test results in 2003 were high compared with all schools and above the average of similar schools. This represents very good achievement for many students. Results in 2004 were similar; the number reaching Level 7 was high compared with national figures. GCSE results in 2003 were also high; all students achieved grades A\* to C in double science with most at the topmost A\* to A grades. This illustrates very good achievement for many students, including those from different ethnic groups and students with special educational needs. Although numbers achieving the topmost grades in 2004 were slightly lower, all students achieved grades A\* to C. Almost everyone studying the science subjects separately in 2003 gained grades A\* to C. All did so in 2004.
91. Current standards in Year 9 are well above average. Achievement, overall, is very good. Learning flourishes in interesting lessons born out of inventive planning, that captures and tantalises students' eagerness to learn. Books show how extensively they widen their technical vocabulary and very good opportunities for practising numeracy but not enough for constructing hypotheses and teasing out results of experiments.
92. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. Achievement is very good for many students. Books showed that a substantial amount of work is highly organised reflecting a high degree of commitment from students, which helps their reflection. The presentation of investigative records is praiseworthy. The very best makes hypotheses, rooted in advanced work explicit, conclusions consistent with results and very good detailed, critical evaluations. Support is thorough in helping those who have difficulties justifying variables, and recognising anomalies. Many have marked aptitude in mathematics so competently deal with calculations and formulae. Year 10 students enthusiastically responded to tasks because of their teacher's high, ambitious, expectations of what they were capable of understanding, and the interesting demonstrations, which led to their very good progress in learning about thermal radiation. Learning slowed down in sluggishly paced lessons.
93. Teaching and learning are good overall. It ranges from excellent to satisfactory. A strength is the teachers' subject expertise and enthusiasm to share it. Several lessons had pacy questioning; students enjoyed batting back answers in pushing learning forward. Repeating an idea through different interesting activities and demonstrations, made sure that they deepened their understanding about energetics, because it was treated from different viewpoints. Well-prepared lessons were imaginative in nurturing learning. Through adept questioning, the best teaching caused students to untangle new ideas themselves. Although not especially focused, marking is mainly consistent. High quality comments usually help students in their learning; checks that they have been acted upon are not routine. Learning is stunted in slow paced lessons, caused by weak planning and narrow teaching methods. There is scope for more involvement of students in imaginative endings of lessons to help consolidate learning.
94. Leadership is good. The new director of science is already supported well by colleagues. There is a clear vision and high expectations for future developments in meeting the aims of the school's Science College Status. Good choices have been made using specialist talents of

staff in developing the department's work in technology. Management is good. The analysis of performance is strong. Improvement since the last inspection is very good; standards, teaching and achievement have further flourished. Schemes have yet to underpin wider teaching styles. Classroom observations have yet to sharply focus upon links between teaching and learning to develop a wider range of approaches.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Work is learned in an engaging context.
- Students enjoy lessons and work very hard.
- Computers are insufficiently used in other curriculum areas.

### **Commentary**

95. Standards in full course GCSE were very high in 2004. Very high standards in previous years were sustained. Students gain higher grades in ICT than they do in other subjects and this represents very good achievement. Standards in short course GCSE were well above average in 2004, as they were in previous years. This represents good achievement.
96. For current students in Year 11 taking the short course standards are well above average. Students competently use the advanced features of a wide range of software packages. Project work is very well planned and when finished, thoroughly evaluated. This represents good achievement as most have only 35 minutes per week of ICT lessons. Standards for students taking the full GCSE are very high. Their work is often of a professional standard and shows in-depth planning, testing and evaluation. Their achievement is very good.
97. In Year 9 standards are well above average. Students have a thorough understanding of the main features of a wide range of software. They plan their work very well. They have a clear understanding of the concept of a target audience. However, few attain the highest levels of work, for example in databases, because there is insufficient timetable time for the subject in Years 7 to 9. While for most this represents good achievement, as they enter the school with above average computing standards, the achievement of the highest attaining students is satisfactory. Achievement for those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is as expected.
98. Teaching and learning are good. Students find work challenging and work very hard to solve the problems they are given. They enjoy the work because it is set in an industrial context making it relevant and interesting. Students cover a lot of work in lessons because expectations are high and clear time limits are set. Behaviour is excellent. In some lessons in Years 7 to 9 introductions are too long leaving too little time for learning practical skills. Students learn well from the regular homework that reinforces and extends class work.
99. Leadership is good. There is a clear vision and a commitment to raising standards. There is a strong team of dedicated teachers. Management is good. Monitoring of work is well established. Examination and other results are carefully reviewed and used to improve standards. Assessment is good; it is thorough and regular. Assessments are not returned as levels or grades and this hampers the tracking of progress by students and teachers.
100. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The school now teaches the full National Curriculum. Standards have risen considerably. Teaching, leadership and management are now all good. However, provision for cross-curricular ICT is now unsatisfactory.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

101. Provision is unsatisfactory. While the school has recently increased its computer resources, the current number is still insufficient for the size of the school. As a result other subjects do not have sufficient access to computers and students have too few suitable opportunities to practise and develop the skills they have learned in their ICT lessons. The school is actively addressing this shortcoming. Some good use was seen: in physical education students use video to improve their gymnastics. In science, a department with its own set of laptop computers, students make good use of data logging hardware to collect temperature readings. Departments are ready to use computers; they have clear plans for computer use reflecting the school's clear statement of intent.

## HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography, history and religious education, which were inspected in full.

### Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards, including in GCSE examinations, are very high against the average.
- Teaching is very good and leads to very good learning.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are excellent and lead to very good achievement.
- There is insufficient ICT and fieldwork to enrich the curriculum in Years 7 to 9.

#### Commentary

102. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 were very high against the national average and showed improvement on the previous year. The proportion attaining the highest grades was very high and has increased. Most students met or exceeded expected levels of attainment. Students did better in geography than they did in most of their other subjects.

103. By Year 9 standards have improved since entry in Year 7 and are well above average. Achievement over Years 7 to 9 is good. Students have a very good grounding in geographical skills. Most use and interpret maps and graphs well. Knowledge of place is good but understanding of spatial patterns and processes although satisfactory needs further development. Higher attainers, including gifted and talented students, are generally well challenged. Average and lower attainers progress well and those with English as an additional language do as well as other students. There is no significant difference in the progress made by students of different ethnic groups. By the end of Year 11 standards are very high. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is excellent. This is due to consistently high quality teaching and students' excellent attitudes to learning. Best independent study GCSE projects are of exceptionally high standard. The regular testing of work using GCSE examination questions over Years 10 and 11 contributes much to the very high level of achievement.

104. Teaching and learning is mostly very good. Classroom management is excellent. Relationships are warm and there is a relaxed yet purposeful air in lessons that is conducive to good learning. Teaching strengths include very good planning, well-structured and interesting lessons, and the positive encouragement and engagement of students in active learning, using a suitable range of teaching methods including modern technology. Homework reinforces teaching and learning excellently. Best teaching is lively, enthusiastic and has realistic expectations. Learning benefits from the excellent attitudes and behaviour of students both in collaborative group work and independent study. Learning would be improved if all lessons were fully placed in the context of previous study and there were regular visual consolidation of learning on the interactive white-board to re-enforce the main teaching points.

105. Leadership and management are very good. Curriculum planning is good but should focus more precisely on the knowledge, understanding and skills to be learnt. Assessment overall is good but there is a need to involve students more in the assessment of their work and setting of targets for improvement. There is a very good coherent programme of ICT but it is not satisfactorily implemented due to difficulties of access to computer facilities. Fieldwork undertaken provides very effective learning but it is inadequate in Years 7 to 9. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## History

Provision in history is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students attain very high standards as a result of very good teaching.
- Excellent leadership provides a very clear direction for the subject.
- Assessment procedures are used very well to show students how to improve.
- The students' excellent attitudes to work promote very good learning.

### Commentary

106. Standards in Year 9 are well above average, an improvement since the last inspection. Recent teacher assessments are well above average. All students develop outstanding skills of enquiry and extended writing, based on very good literacy skills. Year 9 students, especially the most able, have highly developed skills of critically analysing sources and interpreting events, helped by excellent listening and debating skills. Students achieve very well, given that they enter the school with skills in history that are just above average. Lower attaining students achieve equally well, an improvement on the last inspection.
107. GCSE examination results in 2004 were well above average. Passes at A\*/A were four times the national average for girls and significantly exceeded the school's average. Examination results have significantly improved since the last inspection, especially at the highest levels. In work seen, standards by Year 11 are very high and all students achieve well. Students' skills of independent enquiry, interpretation and analysis of sources continue to develop well, as seen in their studies in depth on Nazi Germany and the Vietnam War.
108. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school and better than at the last inspection. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge very well to plan lessons thoroughly. Teachers' expectations of high standards of work, lead to challenging activities using a variety of resources that stimulate very good learning, especially critical thinking. The emphasis on developing literacy and independent enquiry, very effectively promotes students' skills of research, extended writing and working by themselves. The very good relationships with students also encourage very good learning, enhanced by the students' excellent attitudes to work. They show very good initiative and confidence in their ability and much enthusiasm for the subject. Assessment procedures are very good. Thorough marking provides students with helpful advice about how to improve. Analysis of results and target setting are very good, an improvement on the previous situation.
109. Leadership is excellent. The head of department sets outstandingly high expectations of students and teachers and is not complacent with success. As a result of her strong sense of direction, improvements since the last inspection have been very good. Standards throughout the school and the quality of teaching have improved. Teachers' work very well together in joint planning. Management is very good. Teaching is very well monitored and good practice shared. The promotion of learning is encouraged through the good accommodation, attractive displays of students' work and the good range of outside visits. Although the use of

information and communication technology by teachers has improved, the use of computers by whole classes has yet to be fully developed as a resource.

## Religious education

Provision for religious education is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement are very high in all year groups.
- Teaching and learning are excellent.
- The department benefits from excellent leadership and management.
- All students have a highly positive commitment to their studies.
- The subject makes a very important contribution to students' personal development.
- Departmental documentation is exemplary.

### Commentary

110. Results in the full and short course GCSE examinations have been very high in recent years and nearly all students have achieved the highest grades. Standards seen in the current inspection are also very high compared with those expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus by the end of Years 9 and 11. During their first three years at the school, students develop a very clear knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs and those of other world religions, such as Islam and Hinduism. As a result of these early advances, students become very confident in expressing their opinions and developing their ideas in extended writing. In this context, some excellent written work was seen from Year 8 students on the meaning of parables. This has addressed an issue arising from the previous report about lack of rigour in written tasks at this stage. In Years 10 and 11, all students follow a short course GCSE and develop a thorough understanding of spiritual and moral issues; for example, in some excellent comparative work on Christian and Moslem views on the role of women in society. Students who follow the full course also achieve very high standards in terms of developing their subject skills.
111. These very high standards and levels of achievement are directly linked to the quality of teaching, which is excellent overall. There is an air of rigour and purpose in all lessons and teachers use their excellent subject knowledge with great skill to motivate and stimulate students. Lessons are planned thoroughly and all students are expected to become active participants in their own learning. They do so with commendable enthusiasm. As a result, excellent relationships are forged in classrooms and students show great respect for their teachers and for each other.
112. The leadership and management of the department are excellent with very strong support from a dedicated teaching team. Departmental documentation is exemplary with a very clear development plan for future growth. The previous report noted a lack of consistency in marking. This is no longer the case, as students' work and progress are assessed rigorously. The subject makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of all students, particularly in the area of multicultural understanding. Information and communication technology is beginning to have a major and positive impact on the work of the department and students benefit from a wealth of opportunities to visit places of religious interest and listen to visiting speakers. Display is used very imaginatively to create a highly stimulating learning environment.
113. Overall, the department has built very well on the high standards noted in the previous report. Religious studies is now a considerable strength in the school and the department is to be congratulated on its success and commitment to the highest standards.

### Example of outstanding practice

#### **A Year 10 lesson was observed that encapsulated the inclusive and imaginative practice of the religious studies department.**

Students examined the Jewish festival of Purim and re-enacted the story of Esther using homemade masks and shakers to ward off the evil Haman. The lesson culminated in the consumption of kosher food prepared by the students themselves and the showing of a video of the same festival in north London. The lesson was a rich feast of different experiences and an excellent example of spiritual and multicultural development.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

The provision for design and technology is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students enjoy practical activities in variety and create top quality products.
- The success rate in GCSE examinations is very high (mostly A\* in textiles).
- The numbers of students choosing the subjects for GCSE and sixth form are increasing.
- In years 7,8 and 9 some students lack confidence in their own ability to succeed.

#### Commentary

114. Standards in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were very high. 2004 results were similar. Relatively small numbers chose the subject but all passed the examination with many achieving top grades. Standards, in tests set by teachers, by the end of Year 9 were also very high in 2003 and 2004. Standards in the work seen are very high by the end of Year 11. Students combine creativity with precision and quality. Standards in the work seen are well above average by the end of Year 9. Their analysis of products and designs is very thoughtful in lessons. Students' written comment in their planning is less detailed.
115. Achievement through Years 10 and 11 is very good. Relationships are excellent and students respond rapidly to meet the teachers' requirements. Achievement through Years 7,8 and 9 is good. However, students are not systematically involved in assessing their own work and taking the next step to improve more independently and at the right speed, even though they have, in most cases, already developed very good study skills.
116. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good. Excellent well-focused guidance was given on 'post-it' notes attached to work. Guidance in lessons on how to get the top grades was very good and produced immediate improvement. Teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 are good. Opportunities for choice provided by confident teachers enable each student to work at a fast pace, modifying a commercial product to create a new and more distinctive one. However, in books seen, the feedback given about what to do next to improve lacks some consistency and this in turn affects the confidence the students have in their own ability to achieve, with greater independence and confidence, the next step towards the higher level.
117. Improvement has been very good since the last inspection. Standards are higher. Technical support and the use of computers are good. The new workshop is very good. Leadership is very good and management is good. Inconsistencies in approach are being reduced. The team has a shared view of what needs to be done and the capacity to develop new courses, such as 'product design' to the same high standard as 'textiles.' However, the fully timetabled accommodation does not make joint planning, the use of computers nor the moderation of marked work as convenient as they might be.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

The focus was on art and design and music and these subjects were inspected in full; drama was sampled.

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Standards are exceptionally high, especially in Years 10 to 11.
- Students make excellent progress in their development of skills in two and three dimensional work.
- Sketchbooks are exceptional, particularly for GCSE, including very high standards in observational studies and imaginatively annotated visual and written research.
- Teaching and learning are excellent.
- The school's lack of information and communication software means that staff can not develop students' creative use of computers properly in Years 7 to 9.

#### **Commentary**

118. Students' standards on entry are above average, but their experience of art is very mixed. Entry standards are not as high as in core subjects. Students make very rapid progress in acquiring high levels of skill in 2 and 3 dimensional techniques. They apply high levels of intellect very creatively, so that, by the end of Year 9, standards are well above average. Sketchbooks provide a very good record of learning. Standards are greatly enhanced by the large volume of work students produce as homework. Attitudes and behaviour in lessons and elsewhere are excellent, contributing significantly to students' outstanding achievements and developing confidence.
119. Achievement is excellent. Students continue to acquire an extended skills range early on in Year 10, applying and combining these with increasing maturity in their work. Excellent individuality and expressiveness are strong features from early on in Year 10, in sketchbooks and in final pieces. Creative interpretation of ideas is exceptional. GCSE results have been very high in recent years, with A\*/A grades well above those in similar schools. Year 11 work is equally outstanding, with attainment on track to be very high again. Students of all abilities achieve similarly well, with able students consistently achieving the very highest grades.
120. Teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers understand very clearly how to enable students to achieve outstanding results, often from a basis of average skill and significant under-confidence at Year 7. Teaching of skills in drawing and mark making using a rich range of media is excellent. The focus on direct observational work at all stages is key to students' success, because this ability gives them confidence to be creatively experimental. Curriculum planning is carefully structured to provide excellent progression in skills learning. Teacher's challenge and stretch higher attaining students very effectively, giving very good support to less able students in tightly targeted one-to-one help in lessons. Expectations of homework are very high, matched by students' own commitment and hard work. Cross-curricular elements such as vocabulary development, citizenship and work-related learning are seamlessly included into all planning, so students learn to regard these properly as integrated aspects of the subject. Excellent examples of joint class-work, group- and pair-work, provide a stimulating range of learning opportunities for all students. Assessment is very good, with self-evaluation newly introduced to include students well in the process of judging their achievement.
121. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. New teachers are very well developed, maintaining the very high quality described. A very challenging curriculum ensures

that projects develop students' intellectual capacities very well, whilst increasing their confidence in applying subject skills effectively. Department resources are used very efficiently, including information and communication technology for older students. School information and communication technology suites lack enough software for teachers to develop younger students' understanding of how computers should be used as routine tools in their range of creative techniques. The department has improved well from a very strong position at the time of the last report.

122. Drama was sampled. Lessons in Years 9 and 10 were seen. Standards in GCSE examinations are well above average. In lessons, students reach very high standards as a result of very good teaching and they achieve very well. By the end of Year 9 students identify and portray emotions and they evaluate the exemplars well. Teachers have high expectations and in their questioning challenge students effectively. The teachers' knowledge of drama and theatre is a real strength.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in Year 11 are very high.
- Teachers enable all students to respond enthusiastically to music-making opportunities.
- Plans are in place to increase the provision for music technology in Years 7 to 9.

### **Commentary**

123. GCSE results for A\* to C grades in 2003 and 2004 were very high in comparison to the national average. In 2004 the 13 students entered gained either an A\* or an A grade.
124. For current students standards in Year 9 are well above average. In the last inspection they were found to be average. Students enter school with above average musical abilities and they achieve very well. By Year 9 students have a good knowledge of the keyboard and understand and use basic chords well. They make frequent reference to musical vocabulary and use this very well when answering questions about an extract of music. They play classroom instruments with skill in an ensemble performance. Their vocal skills are well developed. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve as well as other students. More musically able students make excellent progress in all aspects of the work.
125. Standards in Year 11 are very high. No lessons were seen in Year 11 due to mock examinations, but analysis of students' work confirms this judgement. In the last inspection standards were found to be well above average. Students' achievement is excellent. Students' compositions and performances are of a high standard. They compose for a range of instruments and use music technology well to devise and refine their ideas. They perform as soloists and ensemble players and understand the requirements for a successful performance.
126. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 9. No secure judgement can be made about teaching in Years 10 and 11, as only one lesson was seen in Year 10. In that lesson teaching was excellent. Teachers use their own musical knowledge to aid students' learning. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, students composed a piece, based on the twelve bar blues. As a result of the teacher's input, each group understood how their piece might be improved to make a greater impact on the listener. Very good provision is made for developing students' literacy and numeracy skills in lessons. There is good provision for students to use music technology in Years 10 and 11.

127. Leadership and management are excellent. The director of music has an exemplary overview of the subject and ensures that focus is always given to raising students' achievement. Very good assessment procedures enable students' progress to be accurately monitored. Excellent provision is made for extra-curricular activities and regular opportunity is provided for students to perform in concerts, both in and out of school. Many students have gained success in external music examinations and at the Sutton Music Festival. The department's reputation for the high standard of musical performances is well deserved. Instrumental teachers make an outstanding contribution to students' musical development. Accommodation and resources are very good and contribute positively to standards achieved.
128. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards have risen in Years 7 to 11 and the quality of teaching has improved. The library provision has been updated. The provision for music technology in Years 7 to 9 is not yet fully developed.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at GCSE are well above average.
- The quality of teaching overall is very good.
- The head of department provides very good leadership.
- Achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11.
- The attitudes of students are very good and sometimes excellent.
- Target setting for improvement by students in lessons needs further development.
- Use of outcomes from assessment information would improve achievement further.

### **Commentary**

129. At the end of Year 9 in 2004, teachers' assessments show the majority of students to be working at a level in line with national averages. GCSE results are well above the national average (A\* to C 100 per cent 2004). There are no differences in the attainment of any groups of students.
130. Standards seen during the inspection for the present Year 9 group show more students to be achieving at a level above the national average. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. Standards in Years 10 and 11 in the core physical education programme are above the national average. Achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11. Inspection evidence confirms that Year 10 GCSE students' standards are well above the national average. It was not possible to see any Year 11 work due to mock examinations.
131. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 they are very good. Where teaching is very good, learning is very good. In the best lessons, teachers set very high expectations, subject knowledge is very good and learning outcomes are identified. Teaching ensures that students can evaluate and improve their own performance and that of others, as seen in Year 10 GCSE netball where students took on the role of coaches to younger students. Citizenship skills are a key outcome of teaching and learning. Planning ensures that learning is matched to individual needs including specific planning for students with physical needs so that they are very well integrated into lessons. Where teaching is good, students need more opportunities to plan to improve short term. Students could be helped further if the marking of written work set extended improvement targets. The attitudes of students are very good, sometimes excellent, and work rate is very high.
132. The range and quality of extra-curricular sport in the school are very good. The inter-house competitions are organised by sixth form students and all students participate. Students are

involved in a range of competitions both at school, county, regional and national level. The department celebrates the achievement of its students excellently.

133. Leadership is very good and management is good. The head of department has vision for the subject; improvement strategies are well focussed and monitored. She leads by example in teaching and is highly motivated, as are the rest of the staff team. Staff provide very positive role models and students enjoy coming to their lessons.
134. Opportunities to use information and communication technology are developing. The department website is a very useful tool to support learning for all students. Accommodation is very good. The classroom and resource base provide very good learning resources for all students. Assessment is more closely linked to teaching and learning, although outcomes from the assessment information could be used better to improve achievement further. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

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

Personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught as part of a combined course in Years 7 to 11. Planning and documentation were sampled and a few lessons were observed.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching makes a clear contribution to students' achievement.
- The subject is well led and managed so that a rich curriculum is offered.
- There is inadequate monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, especially during the tutorial periods.
- Very good opportunities are provided for students to participate in active citizenship.
- There are weaknesses in the assessment procedures.

### **Commentary**

135. In Year 9, standards are well above average. Given students' above average standards on entry to the school, this represents good achievement. Students are developing well in their knowledge and understanding of responsible citizenship. By Year 11, current standards are well above average. Students continue to achieve well. All students demonstrate a good understanding of concepts such as rights and responsibilities, justice and fairness and can relate these to their own and others' experiences. They show a good ability to structure ideas in relation to citizenship concepts and values. Skills of enquiry and both oral and written communication are well developed in all years.
136. Teaching is good overall. It is best when teachers of other subjects use their good knowledge and confidence to widen students' understanding of citizenship through their own subject. They develop the students' important citizenship skills of analysis and evaluation, as when Year 9 students in history very effectively discussed racial discrimination in America. The very good use of questions and wide range of teaching styles challenges students to think about their own responses to issues. This enables them to develop well their skills, attitudes, values and independence of thought, feelings and actions. The good learning is promoted by the very good attitudes of the students to work. However, learning and achievement in a significant minority of tutorial periods is only satisfactory as teaching often lacks clear planning and meaningful discussion to engage all students.
137. The school is committed to the provision of citizenship education and sees it as integral to students' personal development. All students have very good additional opportunities to

develop an understanding of responsible citizenship and the democratic process. They readily participate in school and year councils, recycling, house assemblies, and drama fest and support a range of charities.

138. The good leadership and management of the subject make a significant contribution to students' achievement in this area. The teaching of citizenship is very well supported by a comprehensive scheme of work, resulting in a strong, whole-school awareness of the importance of the subject. Most subjects show a strong commitment to it by including it in their schemes of work and lesson objectives. Clear assessment procedures are in place that enable the coverage of topics to be recorded, although they are not implemented in all subjects. There is inadequate monitoring of teaching and learning, especially during tutorial periods, so that good practice is not being shared. Nevertheless, the good progress made in recent years in the development of citizenship provides a firm base for further improvement.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

This inspection focussed mainly on thirteen subjects, and these were inspected and are reported on in detail here. 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. These were the subjects that were not taken forward to A2 by the Year 13 students.

### Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	8	100.0	80.9	0.0	27.8	35.0	32.5
Biology	8	87.5	67.0	25.0	11.3	32.5	21.3
Business Studies	2	100.0	77.5	0.0	17.6	35.0	27.0
Chemistry	8	100.0	100.0	50.0	15.7	42.5	25.4
Drama	2	100.0	88.5	45.0	32.2	45.0	32.2
English / English Language	4	100.0	85.9	50.0	19.7	42.5	30.0
English Literature	5	80.0	86.9	40.0	20.3	34.0	30.9
French	4	75.0	77.6	50.0	17.9	35.0	27.1
Design and Technology	1	100.0	81.2	0.0	20.2	30.0	29.1
General Studies	6	100.0	76.1	0.0	19.3	31.7	26.9
Geography	15	100.0	76.5	53.3	24.0	46.0	28.6
German	3	100.0	82.8	66.7	19.5	50.0	29.2
History	3	100.0	81.8	100.0	21.8	56.7	29.7
Information Technology	5	100.0	69.8	40.0	12.5	36.0	22.8
Mathematics	24	70.8	67.0	12.5	19.1	24.6	24.4
Other Languages	1	100.0	85.8	0.0	44.8	40.0	37.7
Other Social Studies	24	100.0	72.3	41.7	19.4	38.8	25.8
Physics	8	100.0	79.4	37.5	22.6	38.8	29.1

Religious Studies	7	100.0	81.9	0.0	24.6	28.6	31.0
Sociology	9	88.9	73.3	66.7	20.5	42.2	26.4
Spanish	5	100.0	78.5	80.0	17.7	50.0	27.2
Sports/PE Studies	1	100.0	78.5	100.0	19.5	60.0	27.5

### **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	14	100.0	98.9	57.1	54.1	102.2	90.1
Biology	48	100.0	96.8	62.5	42.1	89.8	80.0
Business Studies	28	50.0	98.8	50.0	39.7	90.8	79.9
Chemistry	28	100.0	98.1	46.4	52.3	89.7	86.8
Classical Studies	4	100.0	99.8	75.0	59.2	N/a	90.8
Drama	19	100.0	99.7	73.7	43.7	97.5	85.3
Economics	8	100.0	99.2	37.5	55.4	98.3	86.6
English / English Language	20	100.0	99.5	50.0	37.3	105.0	81.5
English Literature	24	100.0	99.6	79.2	46.7	99.6	85.5
French	14	100.0	98.8	78.6	51.0	101.4	87.3
Design and Technology	6	100.0	98.8	50.0	42.7	80.0	83.3
General Studies	138	99.3	95.2	60.1	32.4	92.6	74.3
Geography	22	100.0	98.9	72.7	50.3	104.5	87.7
German	5	100.0	98.4	80.0	48.0	100.0	84.9
History	26	100.0	99.0	88.5	48.0	110.0	86.2
Mathematics	37	100.0	97.6	64.9	59.5	94.1	91.7
Music	4	100.0	99.2	100.0	40.0	120.0	82.3
Other Languages	1	100.0	97.1	100.0	63.7	120.0	94.2
Other Social Studies	57	100.0	98.0	56.1	45.5	89.5	84.0
Physics	16	100.0	97.9	56.3	50.5	95.0	85.9
Religious Studies	10	100.0	99.1	30.0	48.0	82.0	86.4
Sociology	11	100.0	98.5	27.3	46.4	81.8	85.1
Spanish	7	100.0	98.1	57.1	51.3	88.6	87.4
Sports/PE Studies	10	100.0	98.7	60.0	41.4	90.0	82.3

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

### **English**

Provision for English is **excellent**.

- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and convey their love of the subject effectively.
- Students are interested and engaged in the subject.
- Both results in examinations and in work seen in lessons confirm very high standards.

### **Commentary**

139. Standards are very high and achievement is very good indeed. The proportion of A/B grades in English literature A-level has been consistently high for the last three years. Results in both English literature and the more recently introduced English language and literature increased substantially in 2004. The pattern of AS grades is similar. The majority of students continue from AS courses to A-level. Students attain in line with their high prior attainment. A number of students take the Advanced Extension Award successfully.
140. Students arrive in the sixth form with excellent listening and speaking skills and they use them well. Points raised in discussion are carefully considered and sensibly debated. Discussion effectively extends their learning. The texts are challenging and the extensive additional reading done is substantial particularly on the War in Literature unit at the end of Year 13. This enables students to place the works studied in both a historical and literary context. Students make use of their very good writing abilities. They handle extended coursework confidently, arriving at clear but well supported conclusions. In the work of higher attaining students there is often originality in the texts chosen or in themes studied. In the Year 13 language and literature coursework on travel writing, the students write with a strong sense of audience that is reflected in the style chosen. This course unit leads to some very creative work, using many of the students' own experiences and interests. Students are guided in reaching these standards by the very detailed and knowledgeable marking that explains very clearly how to improve.
141. Teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers plan lessons to maximise discussion and then their very effective questioning stimulates the development of ideas. There is constant consolidation of work done by recapping and note taking. Much of the coursework allows students to follow their own interest, which they enjoy but they rely on the teachers' guidance for further reading and research. This does result in a wide range of titles and aspects being chosen. A part of the marking process is giving the grades reached but students also mark essays to the examination criteria, thus strengthening their understanding of improvement. Students finish the courses with a love of reading and writing.
142. Leadership and management are excellent. Students are encouraged to strive for high standards with the help of a professional and committed team. One result is that many students are applying to read English and related subjects at university. Students appreciate the opportunities for extra-curricular activities and willingly assume responsibilities. Sixth form students assess the debating skills of younger students; an editorial team produces a lively magazine for the whole school and a smaller team an 'in house' sixth form literary review. Standards and teaching were very good at the time of the previous inspection and have improved further.

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

143. Students have very good skills in literacy. Their excellent listening skills help them develop a greater understanding of many topics. They enjoy discussion and are articulate and, on occasions, eloquent, as in a debate on euthanasia. Many class discussions clarify their understanding and extend their ideas. Students have no difficulties in any subject in understanding their textbooks and a characteristic of some courses, such as English, is the extent to which they undertake substantial background reading. They write accurately and fluently. Essays are very well structured, with paragraphs firmly secured to the question. The

quality of writing is very high and is a significant factor in the attainment in most subjects, particularly English, science, geography, history and religious education.

## French

Provision in French is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards are well above average.
- Students achieve well as a result of very good teaching.
- Students are very well prepared for examinations.

### Commentary

144. Latin was sampled. Overall standards are very high. There were too few students entered for the most recent examinations to make meaningful comparisons with national figures. In the lessons seen, teaching was excellent, with a strong emphasis on relating language to its social and cultural context. Students enjoy their work and appreciate the extent to which Latin helps them understand the English Language.
145. In the 2003 examinations the proportion of students achieving grades A and B was well above the national average. Using average point scores as a guide, they performed better in French than in most other subjects. All students obtained grades A to E. In 2004 the proportion achieving grades A and B fell but half of those entered obtained grade A.
146. Standards are well above those found nationally. Students in Year 12 show that they have very successfully made the transition from GCSE to the more intellectually demanding work at A Level. Those in the second year of the sixth form have very good oral and listening skills. This results from skilful input by teachers during discussions in order to elicit the maximum amount of spoken French. Standards of writing are very high. Students express themselves on a range of contentious topics, including euthanasia, global warming, and smoking and drug addiction and write resumes of literary works and discuss the characters. They demonstrate very good understanding of grammar and syntax and are adventurous in their use of language. Their work shows maturity and independence of thought.
147. Teaching is very good. In Year 12, although students demonstrate their ability to understand and to talk confidently in French, opportunities to improve can be lost through overuse of English. In Year 13 French is used almost exclusively in lessons and students respond well to this challenge. Teachers ensure that students are very well prepared for examinations. They give clear advice on how they should structure their essays and use innovative ways to improve the breadth of vocabulary and structures used in the writing. Teachers have high expectations of their students. In a Year 13 discussion, for example, the teacher was very supportive but provided demanding written and oral tasks.
148. French is included in the languages department, which makes excellent provision and has excellent leadership and management. In the sixth form students are currently able to learn French, German, Spanish, and Latin. French is very well led within the department and there is a commitment to raising standards. This ethos contributes strongly to students' very high achievement. Work is regularly assessed and the departmental policy on marking ensures consistency. Opportunities for the use of information communications technology to support learning in French are restricted but students are encouraged to use the Internet outside lessons to support their learning. There is excellent capacity to improve provision still further.

## MATHEMATICS

The inspection focused on AS level and A-level examination courses. Provision for students taking further mathematics was sampled.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in AS and A-level examinations are high.
- Increased recruitment and retention.
- Excellent leadership has improved the breadth of courses and examinations.
- The very good teacher subject knowledge ensures very good teaching and learning.
- The excellent classroom relationships considerably increase achievement.
- The department's self-evaluation is not sufficiently developed.

### Commentary

149. GCE A-level mathematics and further mathematics examination results in 2003 were above national averages. GCE AS-level examination results in 2003 were well above national averages and showed a significant improvement on 2002. All students complete the AS-level course and continue into Year 13 to complete A-level.
150. The most recent examination results and achievement in lessons show students reaching standards well above national averages at both AS and A-level and improving on the 2003 examination results. Students achieve well and make very good progress in all areas of mathematics because very good teaching and learning emphasises the acquisition of interpretation skills and effectively utilises the students' high level of algebraic competence.
151. For all courses, very good management has ensured that teacher expertise is well matched to the demands of the curriculum. Teaching and learning is of a high standard. Teachers have high expectations of what students can do and use their very good expertise to provide appropriate challenge and pace. The excellent classroom relationships, established in the main school, are effectively developed to create an ethos where teachers and students work as teams. Students of all abilities frequently provide demonstrations and explanations of new mathematics for the teacher to analyse and probe their understanding. As a result, learning mathematics is a consequence of mature, intellectual debate. By working together in this way students of all abilities quickly learn to cope with the increased range of mathematical vocabulary and notation that is required to understand the way examination questions are expressed. Students of all abilities have good decision making skills and the confidence to independently check process and answers. Although the amount of opportunity for self-evaluation is commendable, the inconsistent quality of teacher assessment sometimes results in lessons where the least able students require a disproportionate amount of support to secure the expected level of achievement.
152. Leadership is excellent. The curriculum and extra curriculum have been developed to ensure that the needs of all post-sixteen students are met. Further mathematics caters for the most able, a module on decision mathematics has been introduced to support those studying a wide range of A-levels and several extra-curricular sessions are provided by external speakers, including authors and university lecturers. As a result, high achievement has been maintained as demand has increased and the reputation of the department has been enhanced.
153. Management is very good. Improvements since the last inspection, such as those made to the curriculum and the department structure, have been well managed. The impact of teaching and learning are thoroughly evaluated and data is analysed well to set targets for individual students. However the department's self-evaluation to further eliminate the lower examination results, such as those achieved in 2003 A-level, is not sufficiently developed. For example,

teachers do not know what effect an increase in the use of information and communication technology to learn new mathematics would have on standards and achievement.

154. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. A-level results are now regularly above or well above national averages, teaching is now very good and the curriculum has increased breadth to meet the needs of a greater number of students.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

155. The development of mathematics as part of the teaching and learning in other subjects has had a positive impact on achievement in information technology, science, geography and economics. Furthermore, several AS and A-level mathematics lessons make reference to the scientific contexts of the content students are studying. However, references to other subjects are minimal and as yet the school does not have a policy for whole school mathematics that extends into post-sixteen.

## **SCIENCE**

The focus was on biology, chemistry and physics.

### **Biology**

The quality of provision in biology is **very good**.

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

- Standards are well above average.
- The students work hard and enjoy studying.
- Teaching is good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The quality of marking varies.
- Short-term planning and monitoring systems are not rigorous enough.

#### **Commentary**

156. A-level results in 2003 were well above average. In 2004, the percentage of students gaining the highest grades was not quite as high as in 2003 but remained well above average. Standards in lessons and students' books are also well above average and students are making very good progress.
157. Teaching is good with much being very good. Strong teacher-student relationships encourage the students' very positive attitudes to study. Teachers have high expectations of the students, they set challenging learning objectives and ensure that these are achieved. Students are encouraged to carry out investigations, which they enjoy and during which they work safely. Where teaching is very good, the pace of lessons is more brisk and the variety of interesting activities stimulates the students' interest and enthusiasm. There are more opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning through group work, research and planning of investigations. These teachers employ a range of assessment strategies to ensure the students' clear understanding and to encourage independent learning. They question widely and they expect students to perform presentations and to evaluate their own work.
158. The students apply and develop their literacy and numeracy skills through various writing, presentation, investigation and group work activities. Teachers' plans identify areas of work, which relate to citizenship and they take every opportunity to address such issues, as in one genetics lesson when students considered the ethics of genetic engineering. Information and communication technology opportunities are also planned. There is a good extra-curricular

programme. Teachers know the students with special educational needs and adjust their teaching to match their needs so that these students are able to make very good progress.

159. The new head of biology displays very good leadership and management qualities. Being a very good teacher herself, she is a very good role model and being supportive of her colleagues, has established team working. She has analysed the examination results and used the information to make a thorough assessment of the department's current situation to begin improvement planning. She has a clear vision of how the subject should develop and is aware that while standards are very high, there remains room for even greater improvement. As there is a high number of A level biology teachers and she also has responsibility for biology in Years 7 to 11, she is aware of the need to introduce systematic monitoring.
160. The accommodation is good and safe. Good quality wall displays including students' work create a stimulating environment. New laboratories are in the process of being built and these will be equipped with electronic interactive white boards to further enhance teaching and learning. Textbooks and apparatus for investigation work are plentiful and of good quality but there are too few computers.

## Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have strikingly strong knowledge of chemistry. They have high expectations of what students are capable of achieving, but have yet to plan and deliver ideas in ways that result in high performances and creditable achievement.
- Students' excellent attitudes towards tackling work, markedly enrich their learning, but more practice in distilling and summarising key concepts is needed to improve its quality.
- Learning is thwarted by lack of meaningful reflection during poorly planned plenaries.

### Commentary

161. A level results in 2003 were below average. They were below average at grade A as they had been for the previous two years. Compared with earlier results, overall achievement was unsatisfactory. In 2004 results were, again, below average. Fewer students than in 2003, achieved grade A but more, grade B. During the past four years, results at the topmost grade have been below average. Seven students, however, exceeded their predicted grade and eleven met it. There were no significant differences in the performance of minority ethnic students. AS results in 2003 were below average. In relation to GCSE results achievement overall was unsatisfactory. This pattern was repeated in 2004 when less than half the entry achieved or exceeded the predicted grade. However, in 2004, all students completed the course.
162. Current standards seen in Year 13 are, overall, average. There are, however, variations within this picture strongly linked to the quality of teaching. A teacher's sharply perceptive questioning clearly led the way through the complex nature of indicators and adeptly challenged their thinking. Uncertainties nevertheless persisted because they were not involved demonstrably enough in explanations, to 'pin down' their learning. From copying notes in a lesson about kinetics, they remembered only isolated facts from its main thrust and failed to deduce the 'big picture'. There are numerous opportunities for students to practise complex calculations although not enough to concisely summarise key ideas and link them together (mapping concepts of the 'big idea') to help the learning process.

163. Current tests of Year 12 students show a mixture of standards and achievement. Most are achieving as expected and moving steadily into advanced work. A few students commented about experiencing the 'big leap' between GCSE and AS work. There is a small core of underachievement but, overall, it is satisfactory. The actual rate of progress is noticeably linked, in no small measure, to students' strong drive to learn, especially in dull sessions. Through sheer determination, they unravelled difficult calculations to learn more about reactions of different compounds with acid and water. After a lengthy review of GCSE work, remembered very well, other students eventually deepened their knowledge. There is scope for teachers to plan a much more challenging set of experiences so that the highest attainers can penetrate ideas at higher levels.
164. The quality of teaching and learning seen was, overall, satisfactory. It ranged from good to satisfactory. Students' eagerness to learn and achieve well plays a major part in improving their learning. They confidently use a range of apparatus because practical activities are planned well, with generous help from high quality technical support. PowerPoint presentations are also used well by both teachers and students to more clearly demonstrate ideas. Teachers have high expectations of what students are capable of achieving and most reassure them as they do so, which encourages learning. Strong subject expertise is used well in widening their knowledge of organic chemistry, for example, in interestingly describing its history. This valuable resource, however, has yet to provide opportunities for students to rigorously challenge assumptions, throughout lessons, to help them clarify their explanations. Other shortcomings in teaching which rein in achievement include weak planning skills rooted in narrow teaching methods resulting in teacher-centred sessions, which depress the quality of learning. Lessons rarely had an interesting ending for students to successfully reflect upon their learning. They have difficulty recalling knowledge well and, in particular, applying it by just making notes to focused questions.
165. Teachers work hard using their skills and talents to support each other but improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning has declined; standards have been below average in recent years resulting in noticeable underachievement. Leadership and management strategies have not yet resulted in improved standards and positive achievement although a new action plan is beginning its development. It has yet to focus upon review, exploration and stringent monitoring of teaching and learning styles. Chemistry is beginning to benefit more from the strong analysis of performance undertaken by the science department.

## Physics

Provision in physics is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average.
- The students work hard and enjoy studying.
- Teaching is very good.
- The quality of marking varies in quality.
- Short-term planning and monitoring systems are not rigorous enough.

### Commentary

166. A-level results in 2003 were well above average and above average for female students. In 2004, there were only five students, too few for comparisons to be made. Over the last two years the number of students studying science has increased considerably. The standard of work seen in these students' lessons and books is well above average. The students are making very good progress.

167. Teaching is very good. Strong teacher-student relationships encourage the students' very positive attitudes to study. They enjoy their lessons and expect to be challenged. The teachers have high expectations of the students, they set challenging learning objectives and ensure that these are achieved. Assessment procedures in lessons are very good but marking is of varying quality. At best, teachers include grades and encouraging comments but they do not always inform students of how to improve. Lessons proceed at a good pace with a range of interesting activities that stimulate the students' enthusiasm. Computers are used regularly to log data and to produce spreadsheets and graphs. The students plan their own investigations and conduct them with minimal support so that they are developing very good independent study skills. The teachers assess students' progress through dialogue and careful questioning and they share their enthusiasm for physics and enquiry with the students.
168. The students apply and develop their literacy and numeracy skills through various writing, debating, investigation and group work opportunities. The teachers are expected to look for and address opportunities for teaching topics relative to citizenship but there was little evidence of such teaching during the inspection. Teachers know the students with special educational needs and adjust their teaching to match their needs so that these students are able to make very good progress.
169. The new head of physics having joined the school only this term is still in the process of assessing the subject's situation but his focus is to maintain or further improve standards and to encourage more students to study the subject at A-level. Being supportive of his colleagues, he has established team working. The three physics teachers work very well together to prepare plans for teaching and longer term subject improvement such as continued improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, particularly the quality of short-term planning and marking.
170. Accommodation is good. Two of the three laboratories are equipped with electronic interactive white boards to enhance teaching and learning. Textbooks and apparatus for investigation work are plentiful and of good quality.

## HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography, history and religious education.

### Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high against the national average.
- Very good teaching on the AS and A level courses results in very good learning.
- Students are very well motivated and achieve very well in Years 12 and 13.
- Students need to prepare themselves better for lessons and contribute more to self-learning.

#### Commentary

171. Recent A-level examination results have been very high against the national average for all students and well above for female students. The AS-level results in 2004 were very high and showed an improvement on the previous years results, particularly in the proportion of students attaining the highest grades. Most students on both courses performed to expected levels or above. The retention rates are very high.
172. Standards of work on the AS-level course are well above average and on the A-level course very high against the national average. Very good achievement is evident over Years 12 and 13. Students in Year 12 show very good knowledge and understanding of introductory topics

covered in both physical and human geography. Work on both courses is covered thoroughly and in great detail. However, course units would benefit from a summary review at the end of each unit so that students do not lose sight of the overview and focus of the topic. A strength of the course is the emphasis placed on independent study and the good use of case studies to illustrate concepts. Critical analysis develops well, particularly in Year 13. Written work is of a very good standard and the higher attainers read widely around the topic and make most perceptive synthesis based on the synoptic approach to their studies. Some lower attainers' evaluations are often limited by narrow application.

173. Overall teaching is very good. Teachers show good subject knowledge when presenting topics and when monitoring students learning. Lessons are very well planned and well organised with the purpose, through enquiry activities, to develop students learning. Learning gains much from very skilful use of the questioning technique as it extends students knowledge and understanding of topics taught. Generally lessons have good pace and productivity and teachers' expectations are very high. Students' attitudes to work and their behaviour are excellent and make a major contribution to the very high standards attained. Individuals make relevant contributions to discussions but at times rely too much on their teacher. They do not always prepare themselves well enough for lessons in order to make a good contribution to discussion based on prior learning.
174. The management of the AS and A-level courses is excellent. The provision is well co-ordinated with staff that teach the subject working well together. Courses are very well planned and fully meet syllabus requirements. Most work is well marked and comments made on how work can be further improved are helpful. Resources are good with good stocks of reference materials, geographical magazines and very helpful intranet and CD materials provided to support learning. The classrooms are pleasant learning environments.

## History

Provision in history is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results are very high in relation to national averages.
- Leadership of the department is excellent.
- Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is well planned and reflects the strength of subject knowledge and challenges students appropriately.
- Students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment.

### Commentary

175. Students' performance in A-level examinations over the past 3 years has been consistently high in comparison with the national average and these results are within the range of the top 5 percent of the country. During this period history has been in the top 3 performing subjects at advanced level within the school, and girls have achieved very well in relation to their prior attainment. These results also show an impressive improvement in the attainment of students compared with examination results at the time of the last inspection when they were already well above national averages. Retention rates are good. History is a popular course with 42 girls studying the AS course in the current Year 12.
176. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of samples of students' work confirm that standards remain very high and achievement is very good. Year 12 students have already developed communication and evidence evaluation skills. Essay writing is well structured with evidence to support individual judgements, as was seen in a written evaluation of the effectiveness of political parties in Italy before the emergence of the Fascists. Year 13 students show highly developed debating skills and contribute confidently to oral discussion. They articulate their view with confidence and persuasion in class debate as with their assessments of the relative

responsibility for the failure to negotiate a peace treaty between Charles 1 and his enemies. Students analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence effectively, for instance, to determine provenance or reliability, to produce well-balanced and effective arguments. Written work is of a high standard and demonstrates a good command of the higher order skills of analysis and synthesis. Students show an excellent knowledge and understanding of the periods and topics being studied and because teachers provide them with a wide range of support materials, students make rapid increases both in the range of their knowledge and the depth of their understanding though few use the internet and information communication technology (ICT) for in-depth research.

177. Teaching and learning are very good. This results from the well-focused, experienced teaching in the department and from the students' highly committed application to study. The quality of teaching girls receive is very good. Excellent subject knowledge and expertise is used to motivate and inform students. Teachers create a powerful learning ethos by imposing an intellectual rigour that has high expectations of learning outcomes. Girls are encouraged to develop as historians, to think as historians and to recognise different interpretations of historical events. Very good management of classroom discussion and the emphasis placed on student presentations leads to good quality oral analysis where girls have developed the confidence to put forward their views. Teachers' marking is thorough and detailed comments are made, designed to improve progress.
178. Leadership is excellent; it is dedicated to ensuring the highest possible standards, it is reflective and self-critical. The subject is extremely well managed by a very experienced head of department assisted by a team of hardworking teachers. Systems are in place, organisation is efficient and the department is managed effectively. Students receive excellent support from teachers. Assessment is regular and the department carefully monitors students' progress on a one to one basis. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection and the issues raised then are no longer applicable.

## Religious education

Provision for religious studies in the sixth form is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very high standards.
- Teaching is excellent.
- Students participate fully in classroom activities.
- There is excellent leadership and management.
- Teachers provide very strong support for students' learning.
- The subject is a highly popular and successful area of sixth form provision.

### Commentary

179. In recent years, results in both the AS and A-level examinations have been consistently very high, and, in the most recent A-level examination; all students entered achieved the highest grades. The standards and levels of achievement reached by students on current courses are also very high, both in terms of their oral attainment and their written work. In Year 12, a large number of students are following the AS course and are developing a thorough knowledge and understanding of philosophical and ethical issues, such as the problem of evil and suffering. Evidence from their early work suggests that most are able to analyse theories to considerable depth; for example those associated with the theodicy of St Augustine. Students' files are very well organised and they are given excellent support in coping with the rigours of academic study. In Year 13, these very high standards are maintained and, at this stage, students are honing their ability to think critically and developing their independent research skills. In this context, some excellent work was seen from Year 13 students on natural moral law.

180. Teaching is excellent. Specialist teachers have an excellent grasp of subject material and use this to promote students' learning skills. Expectations are very high and close attention is paid to the consolidation of learning through the use of questioning techniques that probe students' understanding of various topics. Students are also expected to take ownership of their own learning, and, as a result, they are very keen to take part in lively debates. A major strength is the excellent rapport between teachers and students, creating a sense of enjoyment and pleasure in the pursuit of knowledge. Students are particularly appreciative of the advice and support they are given throughout their courses.
181. There is excellent leadership and management of this curriculum area. Students' progress is monitored rigorously and students benefit from very thorough marking and a wide range of learning materials, both within the department and in the school library. Information and communication technology and the Internet are fully developed as learning tools and students have ample opportunities to attend conferences and listen to visiting speakers.
182. Overall, this is a highly popular and successful area of sixth form provision. The very high standards reached are testament to the excellent quality of teaching and to the total commitment of students to academic study. Students in the sixth form who do not study religious education as an examined subject cover the statutory requirements through aspects of general studies.

## **Psychology**

The quality of provision in psychology is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve very well as a result of teaching that is stimulating and very well organised.
- Teachers' clear explanations of complex ideas help students to feel at ease with their studies.
- Students are very good learners and work very productively in pairs or in groups.
- Students appreciate the extent to which the topics they study touch their lives.
- Teachers use assessment excellently to help students to a greater understanding of how they are achieving and of how they might do better.
- Occasionally, students' ideas are not used well enough to extend their understanding.

### **Commentary**

183. Overall standards in Year 12 are well above average and very high in Year 13. These standards are reflected in their most recent examinations. An above average proportion of students reach the higher grades A and B. Students join the course in Year 12 with above average levels of attainment in their GCSE examinations. Psychology is a new subject for all of them but they are quick to adapt to their studies and all achieve very well in relation to the knowledge and analytical skill they bring to the courses. The current Year 12 students demonstrate well above average standards for this stage of their course whilst Year 13 students are set to reach very high standards. Most students persist to the end of their courses and a significant number intend to continue their studies in psychology when they leave school.
184. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers capture the interest and enthusiasm of the students through very clear explanations of central ideas and theories. A further strength is the extent to which they bring the students' own experience of life to bear on their studies. This gives students a more thoughtful understanding of the world around them, including the world of work. Discussions are often lively and perceptive as students acquire a more critical grasp of the psychological theories they study. The teachers' very good knowledge of what they teach shows itself in the stimulating content of all lessons. The students, in turn, are

eager to learn and show some real skill in discussion and debate, whether working in pairs or larger groups. They take very good notes to support revision.

185. There are occasions when questioning does not help all students to practise defending their views, with the consequence that they sometimes settle for weakly defended opinions. Students are prepared very thoroughly for examinations and get a good grounding in research methods to support their investigations. Teachers use homework very well to encourage independent enquiry. The excellent use of assessment is a further strength. Feedback on written work is precise and helpful so that students know how well they are achieving and how they might improve the quality of their work.
186. The subject is very well led and managed. In the short time she has been in post, the head of department has done much to develop the level of documentation needed to support the work of the department. The good range of books and other materials in the department is used well to support independent study. High standards have been maintained since the subject was introduced. The subject is clearly going from strength to strength.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Technology**

187. Design and technology was sampled. In the one lesson seen in product design (textiles) attitudes were excellent as the students confidently shared their ideas about product quality with the teacher and with each other. They demonstrated well above average understanding of the value of using existing products along with other sources for inspiration when developing new designs. Their achievement was very good because relationships were excellent and quality control systems and routines were of a high standard. The teachers used challenging interventions to ensure the development of greater creativity and precision.

### **Information and communication technology**

Information and communication technology is offered at both A and AS-level.

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well as the result of good teaching.
- Students' attitudes are positive and they work hard.
- Students need more opportunity to discuss their work in groups.

### **Commentary**

188. A-level was examined for the first time in 2004 and results were well above average and students' achievement was good. Results in the AS examination in 2004 were well above average, and similar to those of 2003. This represents good achievement too.
189. For current students in Year 13, standards are well above average. All students have a very good grasp of computer security, types of networks and computer protocols. Students thoroughly test their practical work for accuracy and produce high quality user manuals. Evaluations of projects are very detailed. Standards for AS students in Year 12 are also well above average. They use spreadsheets to solve commercial problems, employing many advanced features such as macros. Achievement is good in both years.
190. Teaching and learning are good and are raising achievement. Learning in practical lessons is very good because students find the work very challenging and engaging. Here they receive very good personal help and advice, which they greatly appreciate. Students work hard in

lessons and on homework tasks and are keen to do well. Some theory lessons are over directed by the teacher and do not include enough time for discussions to allow students to clarify and develop their ideas.

191. Leadership and management are good. Staff are committed to improvement. Standards are monitored well and good corrective action is taken if they fall. Assessment is good and provides students with valuable feedback on progress towards targets. In many lessons students test their knowledge using past examination questions and this is raising standards. ICT has shown good improvement since the last inspection because well above average standards have been sustained.

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

192. This is satisfactory. Students' skills using computers are well above average. Students use computers very well in psychology and design and technology where students make very good use of digital cameras in product analysis. Computers are used well in many subjects for word processing coursework and for Internet research. Students make use of PowerPoint when presenting their work. There is poor use of computers in business studies. Lack of access to computers is hampering computer use in history and physical education lessons. Students have satisfactory access to computers for private study.

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

Physical education was inspected in full and drama was sampled.

193. Drama was sampled in Year 13. Standards in AS and A-level examinations are all well above average. Students reach very high standards as a result of very good teaching and they achieve very well. Teachers have high expectations and in their questioning challenge students effectively. The teachers' knowledge of drama and theatre is a real strength. In the work seen, students show considerable understanding and skill as they rehearse and refine their examination pieces.

### **Physical Education**

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

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

- Very good teaching and learning leads to high standards: examination results are well above national averages.
- Significant curriculum developments in recent years are due to strong leadership.
- Although extra-curricular provision is very good, at least one third of students are not sufficiently active.

#### **Commentary**

194. Dynamic, visionary leadership over recent years has resulted in an expansion of courses and numbers of participating students. Examination results at both AS and A-level are consistently well above national averages and a significant minority of students reach the very highest standards at national level in various sports. Written work is of a high standard and students successfully develop the capability to analyse, evaluate and hypothesise. This represents good achievement.

195. Teaching and learning are very good. Knowledgeable, thought provoking and well-planned lessons motivate students to work effectively and independently for extended periods. The use of a range of carefully selected information, tasks and topics allow all students to

understand what they are doing, why and what they have to do to improve. Students rightly value the effective guidance they receive. Teachers make imaginative use of a wide range of resources enabling students to develop their analytical and reasoning skills effectively. Students following the Community Sports' Leaders Award show increased confidence and maturity.

196. Leadership is very good and management good. The capacity to manage coherently all aspects of work and to take on new initiatives is compromised under the present departmental management structure. The range of team and sporting activities is very good. However, at least one third of students are not involved either in clubs or leisure activities and are, therefore, insufficiently active.

## **BUSINESS**

AS and A-level courses were inspected in business education, and are reported below. Economics was sampled. One lesson was seen, in which the quality of teaching and learning was very good and students achieved very well. One lesson of sociology was also seen, again the quality of teaching and learning was very good and students achieved very well.

### **Business education**

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

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

- Very good teaching encourages students to work hard and achieve very high standards.
- Well-organised and very knowledgeable teachers ensure that students learn very effectively.
- Relationships are a strength that enables very effective learning to take place in a good humoured and supportive environment.
- Effective teaching supports students' literacy and numeracy skills development. They can express themselves clearly and concisely in written work.
- Information and communication technology is insufficiently developed for students to obtain transferable skills.

#### **Commentary**

197. In the last three years, standards of attainment in the AS and A-level examinations have consistently been good, and often very good against the national norms. In the 2003 A-level examination, the average points score per student was just above the national level for girls. All students passed, a better than average outcome. This year again, all students passed with well over a half gaining A or B grades, an improving and high-level pattern.
198. In the AS examination, analysis is more difficult because of the variable number entered. However, in 2003 the average point score for the school was higher than the national figure. In 2004 the number of A and B passes was well above national level at three-quarters, and all students passed.
199. Business studies is a new area of study for some students whereas many have studied it at GCSE. In consequence, some students have to come to terms quickly with the nature of the world of commerce and industry. They do this very successfully. Teaching often takes place in the context of current affairs. When considering the variable prior experience when they start the course, and the level all students are now at, students' achievement is very good. They progress very well and their literacy skills are particularly well developed, and their numeracy skills well utilised.

200. Teaching is always very good. Teachers work well as a team and contribute their strengths to the course. They have very good relationships with the students and this enables very good learning. Students answer the questions posed and then listen avidly when the teachers expand and consolidate their answers. They are able to question their teachers to enable them to reinforce their learning. Very good assessment clearly identifies students' strengths and weaknesses, which are supported by helpful marking, which identifies what needs to be done to improve.
201. The only weakness is the accommodation. There are no dedicated rooms and so teachers move from room to room. Displays are not always relevant to students learning and specialist facilities, like ICT, are not available to be included in the lesson planning. As modern business constantly utilises ICT as a tool, it is a weakness that students are not using current standard practice.
202. Leadership is very good, with very effective teamwork and use of individuals' skills. Management is very good, and assessment systems and the management of learning are fully effective. What is needed now is ICT to be used more effectively to support learning and the development of life skills. There have been good developments since the last inspection as new staff have joined and been inducted very effectively into the department.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

203. General studies was sampled. There is insufficient evidence on which to base a judgement on standards. However students have a good knowledge and awareness of the impact of media on society and of the different views held by different groups of people. They also focus on issues raised in the media affecting society such as the relativity of crime and punishment. Year 12 students give very good presentations to Year 11 students on work experience and mock examination experience and the build up to GCSE examinations. Achievement ranges from good to very good. The quality of teaching varies from very good to unsatisfactory. Occasionally there is a lack of challenge: tasks and lesson content do not always stretch the high level skills students already demonstrate. The planned programme includes aspects on careers education, citizenship, religious education drugs, and sex and relationships education. Whilst the subject supports the personal development of students, the management team have not yet monitored provision to ensure that it is consistently of a high quality.

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

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