

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **QUEENSMEAD SCHOOL**

South Ruislip, Middlesex

LEA area: Hillingdon

Unique reference number: 102443

Headteacher: Mr Nigel McLaughlin

Lead inspector: Dr David Benstock

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> September 2004

Inspection number: 268885

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1,215
School address:	Queens Walk South Ruislip Middlesex
Postcode:	HA4 0LS
Telephone number:	(0208) 845 6266
Fax number:	(0208) 845 8331
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Allan Walker
Date of previous inspection:	25 <sup>th</sup> January 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Queensmead School is an 11 - 18 mixed, comprehensive school and is about average size. The number on roll is around 1,200, of which 180 are in the sixth form. It is situated on a large site in a built-up area of South Ruislip, Middlesex, on the outskirts of London and the school draws students mainly from Ruislip, Ealing and Harrow. The school is committed to its links with the community and benefits from being adjacent to a sports centre and 'Goals' sports facility. It has been awarded the status of Specialist Technology College. The socio-economic background of students reflects a wide range of family circumstances but overall is below average. The proportion of families having experience of higher education is below average and also there is some social deprivation in terms of overcrowded living conditions. The number of students who leave or join the school at other than the usual time is about average. The school is popular and is heavily oversubscribed for entry in Year 7. Approximately 80 per cent of students have White British heritage, 12 per cent are of Asian, Black or mixed heritage and the remainder have a range of different backgrounds. The number of students whose first

language is not English is higher than in most schools but the number at an early stage of language acquisition is low. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is close to average. The percentages of students identified as having special educational needs and of those with statements of special educational need are in line with the national averages. Standards on entry to the school are average. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is broadly average but with a slightly greater proportion of students with more modest GCSE points scores and correspondingly fewer with higher scores. A wide range of A-level and vocational courses is offered. There is a small sixth form consortium arrangement with one other school, but very few students are currently involved in this.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20243	David Benstock	Lead inspector	
9189	John Horwood	Lay inspector	
3643	Derek Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics
28199	Peter Lawley	Team inspector	English English as an additional language (EAL) Drama
2893	John Manning	Team inspector	English (sixth form)
5241	Cyndi Millband	Team inspector	Science Biology (sixth form)
17923	Michael Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Special educational needs (SEN)
15051	Lynne Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology
20533	David Rogers	Team inspector	Art and design Art (sixth form)
23308	John Morrell	Team inspector	Music
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education BTEC early years (sixth form)

22849	Ronald Catlow	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship
19152	Richard Merryfield	Team inspector	History
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education
31705	John Mason	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages German (sixth form)
32328	Neil Donkin	Team inspector	Business education

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

**Queensmead is a good school with a good sixth form.** It gives very good value for money. Students achieve well. The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good in the main school and sixth form. The school offers a good, broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of most students and good opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation is in need of improvement to ensure achievement is maintained. Recruitment of specialist teachers has been difficult but currently staffing is good. The provision for care, support and guidance of students is very good. The partnership with parents is good and links with the community and other schools are very well established. Governance is good and the school is very well led and managed by dedicated teams.

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

- Achievement of students is good across most subjects due to good teaching; it is very good in music and design and technology but unsatisfactory in ICT after recruitment difficulties.
- Overall leadership and management of the school by the headteacher and key staff is very good and focused on raising achievement.
- Speaking skills are not consistently promoted in all subjects so that students' abilities in discussion, questioning and independent learning are inhibited.
- Whilst the school is very inclusive, catering for a wide range of needs, provision for gifted and talented students is not fully embedded in all departments.
- Support and guidance for students and the overall level of care are very good, resulting in good behaviour and positive attitudes to work.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation for a number of departments is having a detrimental effect on standards.

Since the last inspection the school has improved well. Standards overall are rising at a rate in line with the national trends. Standards in the sixth form have risen significantly despite year-to-year variations. The quality of teaching in some subjects has been affected by difficulties in recruiting staff but staffing has now established stability. Issues in the last inspection have been largely addressed. The leadership team structure has been adjusted to make it smaller and to give clearer roles and responsibilities. The monitoring of the teaching and learning is very much improved with clear formal processes in place. Governors are more effective in their support and are increasingly involved in monitoring the success of policies. Financial procedures are greatly improved. Time allocation for science and physical education has increased and provision in art and design is now good. Opportunities for using ICT across the curriculum have increased but achievement in ICT has been unsatisfactory having been affected by staffing problems. Standards in French have improved this year after low results in GCSE in previous years. The school still does not fulfil the statutory requirement of a daily act of collective worship and time is insufficient to provide a satisfactory provision for religious education in the sixth form.

## STANDARDS ACHIEVED

The achievement of students overall in the school is good. It is good in most subjects throughout the school including the sixth form; it is very good in music and design and technology, but is unsatisfactory in ICT. The most recent confirmed results at GCSE, in 2003, were above the national average. Standards seen in lessons and students' written work in Year 9 are average, reflecting satisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9 and those in Year 11 are above average, reflecting good achievement in Years 10 to 11. The achievement of students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, is good due to the good support received. Students who are gifted and talented achieve as well overall as other students, but in some subjects their progress is limited by the lack of opportunities.

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

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

The ethos for learning in the school is good. Overall, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and contributes significantly to the quality of personal development. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance was broadly average in 2003 and has now improved. Students are punctual to school. Their involvement in school life and willingness to take responsibility are good.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall in both the main school and the sixth form. They are very good in music and design and technology, satisfactory in science and ICT. Assessment is good overall but there is some inconsistency of use in departments. The curriculum is broad and balanced with vocational options particularly in the sixth form. Provision for extra-curricular activities and enrichment is good. Good provision for workplace learning is made and preparation for employment is very good. Accommodation is unsatisfactory for the sixth form and for several subject areas it is too cramped and poorly ventilated. However, a new sixth form block is under construction. Arrangements for the care, support and guidance of students are very good. Partnership with parents is good and links with the community and other schools are very effective.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school overall are both very good. The headteacher and other key staff have a clear sense of purpose and are very focused on raising achievement. Performance data is carefully analysed and good procedures for the monitoring of teaching by heads of department are in place. The governing body provides good support and shows great commitment to the school. Support for new and training teachers is very good.

## PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very supportive of the school believing that there are high expectations and good teaching. They appreciate very much the arrangements made to help new students settle into the school. They wish to be kept better informed about progress of their children and events in school and consulted more on issues. They think that there is some poor behaviour in school with some bullying, but this was not apparent during the inspection.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Further address the many problems with accommodation so that it is not a barrier to students' learning.
- Promote the development of oral skills through all subjects to raise students' confidence in asking questions and engaging in discussion.
- Ensure that effective provision is made for gifted and talented students in all subjects.

**and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- Ensure that the school provides a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form.

## **THE SIXTH FORM**

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

Queensmead has a good sixth form that is cost effective. Students' achievement overall is good as a result of good teaching and very good management of this area of the school. Results are variable according to the ability of individual students. The overall average point score for advanced level, advanced subsidiary level and vocational qualifications in 2003 was close to the national average, but standards seen in Years 12 and 13 in the ten focus subjects during the inspection were above average.

**The main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- The quality of the early years course in the sixth form, including work related learning and input from external professionals, leads to high motivation and achievement.
- Very good support, advice and guidance including that on careers are provided.
- The quality of leadership and management in the sixth form is very good and is instrumental in the very positive attitudes, commitment and work ethic that prevail.
- Accommodation for sixth form private study is unsatisfactory although new facilities are planned.

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

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>English, languages and communication</b>	Provision in English is <b>satisfactory</b> . Teaching is good but lack of independent learning results in achievement being satisfactory.  Provision in German is <b>satisfactory</b> . Standards are average. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

<b>Mathematics</b>	Provision in mathematics is <b>very good</b> . Very good leadership, management and teaching have resulted in rising student numbers, above average standards in the 2003 examinations and good achievement by students.
<b>Science</b>	Provision in biology is <b>satisfactory</b> . Teaching and learning are good but the opportunities for rigorous discussion have been insufficient. Fieldwork has been limited.
<b>Engineering, design and manufacturing</b>	Provision in design and technology is <b>good</b> . Students achieve well because of the staff expertise, assessment procedures and very good leadership and management.
<b>Humanities</b>	Provision in history is <b>good</b> . Standards are below average but achievement is satisfactory since entry to the course is below average. Teaching is good overall with very good planning but marking of students' work is in need of improvement.
<b>Health and social care</b>	Provision in the BTEC early years nursery-nursing course is <b>very good</b> . Practical interactive methods and work placement lead to high motivation and very good achievement. Standards are above average.
<b>Business</b>	Provision in business education is <b>very good</b> . Students achieve very well because the expectations are high and relationships extremely good.
<b>Visual and performing arts and media</b>	Provision in art is <b>good</b> . Students achieve well because there is strong encouragement and effective assessment to support learning.  Provision in music is <b>very good</b> . Excellent teaching, strong leadership and students' enthusiasm ensure high levels of learning.

Other subjects in the school were sampled including ICT, psychology, media studies, sociology and travel and tourism. The quality of teaching and learning in all these lessons was generally good.

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*The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Care and welfare for students are very good as in the main school. The sixth form tutors have excellent relationships with the students, which, together with the very good assessment systems, enable them to provide excellent support, advice and guidance. Students' progress is monitored carefully in relation to their targets and where necessary appropriate support is provided. The students receive very good preparation for and information about later stages of education.

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

The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The students are helped and encouraged to study appropriate courses. Very good opportunities are given for sixth form students to take responsibility. The day-to-day management of the sixth form is very good with very good communication between all staff and students. The head of sixth form monitors the work of tutors. Very good analysis of the performance of students is carried out based on detailed prior attainment to monitor their progress. The current accommodation is managed as well as possible but study areas are uninviting. New building work now taking place should improve facilities. Finances are very well managed and as a result the sixth form is cost effective.

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

Students are generally very supportive of the sixth form and the opportunities it is able to offer them. The great majority enjoy being at the school and they think it very well run. They find the teachers very accessible and helpful and they are treated fairly and with respect. A minority of students have concerns over the advice they receive about careers and some think there are insufficient extra-

curricular activities particularly in competitive sports. They appreciate the opportunity to discuss the issues in the school through the school forum but would like more input into the agenda.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects and courses**

Overall, standards are broadly average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. They are above average in the sixth form. Achievement is good from entry into the school in Year 7.

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

- Very good achievement in music and design and technology results from very good teaching and students' enthusiasm for these subjects.
- The achievement of students is at least good in the majority of subjects, but has been unsatisfactory in ICT, following a period of recruitment difficulties.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good and, in the focus subjects for inspection, generally exceeds that in the main school.
- From standards on entry to the school being broadly average, standards seen are well above average in mathematics, design and technology and business education in Year 11.
- Standards seen are below average in ICT and science in Year 11.

#### **Commentary**

1. In the National Curriculum tests for Year 9 in 2003, the overall performance of students, as measured by their average point score, was close to the national average. The percentage of students gaining target Level 5 or higher was average in English and above average in mathematics and science. The 'value added' score, which is a measure of progress from the end of Year 6 in primary schools, was below average compared with that in all schools. The average point scores in English and mathematics were broadly in line with the national averages, and that for science was above average. Overall, the attainment in the Year 9 tests has risen at a rate in line with the national trend.
2. The performance results of Year 9 students in 2003 were very low compared with the results in schools where the attainment in national tests taken in Year 6 was at a similar level. In English, mathematics and science the performance results of students were well below average compared with the results in similar schools. In 2004 unconfirmed results in the national tests indicated improvement in English and mathematics and a slight fall in science.
3. In 2003 boys' attainment was marginally less than that of girls, similar to the national picture. There has been no significant difference in the results of boys and girls when comparing the average of the past three years. The local education authority (LEA) analysis of the performance of different minority ethnic groups showed no significant difference between groups in 2003.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.7 (34.1)	33.4 (33.3)

mathematics	36.1 (33.9)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.6 (32.8)	33.6 (33.3)

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

4. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, the average point score per student (counting the best eight subjects) and the percentage of students gaining five or more A\* - C grades, were above the national average and above average compared with those in schools where the prior attainment at Year 9 is similar. The 'value added' from Year 9 to Year 11 in 2003 was well above average compared with that in all schools nationally.
5. Results in GCSE have risen steadily over recent years and at a rate in line with the national trend. However, there was a fall this year in the percentage of students gaining five or more grades A\*-C, from 61 per cent in 2003 to 58 per cent in 2004. In 2003, girls attained higher than boys but not as much as is found nationally.
6. In GCSE subjects in 2003, above average attainment was reached in mathematics, design and technology, English and history. Results were below average in science, geography, ICT and French. Other subjects were broadly average. In 2004 results have been similar to those in 2003 in mathematics and English, risen significantly in geography, French and sociology and fallen in history, science, business studies and art and design. Results in drama in 2003 were well below average in 2003 and have not improved in 2004.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	61 (60)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	38.2 (39.9)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 172 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

7. In the work seen in lessons and in the evidence of students' writing, standards overall are broadly average in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11, reflecting the performance in the most recent validated tests and examinations. Achievement overall from entry in Year 7 is good. Achievement is very good in music, design and technology and business education, where the teaching is particularly stimulating and successful. It is good in many subjects and satisfactory in science, modern foreign languages in Year 7 to 9, physical education in Years 10 and 11 and citizenship. Standards are below average in ICT in Year 9 and Year 11 and achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards seen are below average in science in Years 10 and 11, but the achievement of students is now satisfactory after problems with staffing have been resolved. There is not a great variation in the observed achievement of boys and girls, but some slight variations are found in English, geography, and modern foreign languages with girls achieving more. In design and technology boys achieve slightly better than girls. No variation is observed in the achievement of minority ethnic groups or students with English as an additional language (EAL). Higher and lower attaining students achieve well because of the good additional challenge or support that is provided to match their needs.

8. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve as well as other students relative to their ability. Gifted and talented students have developing opportunities to extend their learning outside school and their progress is good. Gifted and talented students achieve well, particularly in music, art, physical education and science.
9. The proportion of students designated as having English as an additional language is high, but few require support. Overall these students are achieving well, in line with their peers.
10. Standards of literacy are above average overall, but speaking and listening skills are underdeveloped. Lack of skill in discussion and oral participation in lessons is affecting independent learning and the achievement of a significant number of students. Those with English as an additional language develop the literacy skills to enable them to access the curriculum fully. Mathematical skills across the curriculum are good in general and very good in Years 10 and 11. Good examples of the use of graphs, charts and diagrams are evident in geography and science. Overall competence in the use of ICT in subjects is good. Students apply their skills and develop confidence in the use of computers.

#### **SIXTH FORM**

11. In the GCE advanced level examinations in 2003, the average point score per student was close to average. The figure for male students was in line with the average, but that for female was below average, indicating that male students attained higher than female. The average point score increased from 2001, dipped in 2003, but has remained broadly in line with the national average.
12. Small group sizes prevent very reliable comparisons for performance in the A-level or vocational examinations. In 2003, students' performance, in subjects where more than five candidates were entered, was above or well above the national average in mathematics, business studies, geography, biology, physics, ICT and sociology but below average in design and technology and history. Unconfirmed results in 2004 show improvements especially in the sciences, mathematics and design and technology. However, all groups are relatively small and the range of grades from year to year reflects the ability and aptitude of individual students.
13. Results in the vocational courses in 2003 were well above average in vocational certificate (VCE) business education. Results in VCE travel and tourism were above average. Performance in 2004 has been similar. Students have been successful also in the BTEC vocational early years nursery nursing course.
14. Standards seen in the sixth form, mainly reflecting the ten subjects focused upon during the inspection, are above average overall and students' overall achievement from entry into the sixth form is good. There is considerable variation in achievement between subjects. It is very good in music, business studies, design and technology and the BTEC early years course. It is satisfactory in English and history and otherwise good.

15. Sixth form students have generally satisfactory literacy skills and mathematical skills, although further development of oracy is required to improve independent learning.

**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	90.6 (94.3)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	29.8 (45.8)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per student	236.0 (249.7)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 62 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

Attendance and punctuality are good. Behaviour is consistently good throughout the school and very good in the sixth form. Students' attitudes to learning and relationships with each other and with adults are good and very good in the sixth form. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students overall is good.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good procedures are consistently applied to produce good levels of behaviour and to deal with any isolated incidents of oppressive behaviour.
- Good attendance rates have been achieved as a result of very good practices in promoting and monitoring attendance.
- Students' positive attitudes to learning contribute to a good learning environment.
- In a few lessons there is a lack of opportunities for independent learning.
- Co-ordination of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not well enough embedded in departments and in particular more could be done to enable students to appreciate the rich variety of cultures and traditions that exist in multi cultural Britain.
- The school does not fully comply with the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

**Commentary**

16. Students are very supportive of the school, think it is well run and has good helpful teachers who expect them to work hard. They know the expectations of attendance and arrive punctually for school. The school monitors attendance very well and has very good procedures to contact parents if a student does not arrive. As part of the home/school agreement a student who arrives late can be kept at school to make up the time after school on the same day (until 3.30pm).
17. Throughout the school, behaviour is good with class and school rules well known and consistently enforced within the assertive discipline policy, which has clear sanctions and rewards systems. During the inspection no lessons were affected by unsatisfactory behaviour. No bullying was seen during the inspection and the few students who identified that they had been bullied in the past said that it had been well dealt with. Whilst some parents and students identified examples of poor behaviour and some bullying, in the past, the total absence of any oppressive behaviour at present demonstrates the success of the school's procedures. Levels of exclusions are average and are clearly used appropriately to support the school's high expectations of behaviour.

18. Students have good relationships with each other and with adults in the school and this results in a good learning environment where they participate and achieve well. In a few lessons, however, the expected opportunities for independent learning are not always present.
19. Students with special educational needs have good attitudes towards their work, which help them to learn. They relate well to teachers and to learning assistants and have no hesitation in seeking help. They take a pride in their achievements.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC)**

20. The focus of the school on good and respectful relationships is at the heart of students' awareness of and respect for, others within the school community.
21. Students' spiritual awareness is satisfactory. The religious education syllabus and the teaching provide good opportunities for the spiritual development of students and opportunities exist in other subjects to enhance this feature of personal development. Students have a respect for the beliefs of others and have a clear understanding of them. They reflect on issues of belief and form judgments that enable them to develop insights. Not enough is done to ensure that the school complies fully with the provision of a daily act of collective worship.
22. Good moral and social development of students leads to students being well aware of what is expected of them. They are aware of right and wrong actions. Students are keen to be involved in a range of activities and they relate well to adults and their peers. They work well together and many opportunities are provided for them to express their views in paired work, group work and general discussion. Students are self-confident and are developing well as responsible members of the community.
23. Students are aware of their own cultural heritage and that of others. However, their cultural development does not extend sufficiently to develop an awareness and appreciation of the rich variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country. Coordination of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) across the school is not well enough embedded and this results in opportunities not being provided for a planned and coordinated approach to this aspect of students' personal development.

### **Sixth form**

24. The increased maturity of students in the sixth form results in very good behaviour and attitudes to learning. Registration procedures are the same as in the main school and attendance rates are very good.
25. Students are well aware of the impact that their actions can have on others. The general atmosphere in the school encourages all students to develop their own self-discipline. They have a healthy respect for other people's viewpoints. They have well developed viewpoints on many ethical issues and their skills in evaluation are demonstrated in their ability to form sound moral judgments. They are always open to new ideas.

26. Students show initiative and take responsibility for their own actions. In their relationships, they show sincere respect for each other, good moral awareness and social responsibility. Students take responsibility for a wide range of school activities. They have well developed social skills and personal qualities and they demonstrate these in discussions, debates and everyday conversation. They show on many occasions that they are prepared to forego their own immediate interests for a common good. The personal qualities displayed by students enhance their learning considerably.
27. The school does not fully comply with the requirement to provide sufficient religious education for all sixth form students.

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

Authorised absence	
School data	7.8
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.3
National data	1.1

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

**Ethnic background of students**

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Number of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
898	37	1
1	0	0
28	1	0
14	0	0
1	0	0

Mixed – White and Asian	3	3	1
Mixed – Any other mixed background	21	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	54	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	11	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	14	0	0
Black or Black British – African	8	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	3	0	0
Chinese	9	0	0
Any other ethnic group	11	0	0
Parent/student preferred not to say	11	0	0

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education at Queensmead is good. Good teaching is leading to good learning. The quality and range of courses in the curriculum including opportunities for enrichment are good. There are very good arrangements for care, support and guidance. Links with parents are good and links with the community and other schools are very good.

### Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in the majority of departments. Assessment is used well to support learning in Years 7-11 and in the sixth form.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning take place in music and design and technology.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good in the majority of subjects, with the exceptions being science and ICT, where they are nevertheless satisfactory.
- Teachers' relationships with students and management of their behaviour in lessons are good in general and these features of teaching are excellent in music.
- Procedures for tracking achievement are good, but there is inconsistency in the extent to which assessment data is used in departments.
- Provision for the extended teaching of students who are gifted and talented is not yet embedded in all departments.
- Speaking and listening skills are not being developed sufficiently across the curriculum, leading to low-level discussion and response to questions and a lack of independent learning.

### Commentary

28. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers make a positive commitment to inclusion, supporting all students irrespective of their ability or background. There is a strong focus on raising achievement that is driven by the very good school leadership.

29. During the inspection, 145 lessons were observed. Approximately three quarters were good or better and one quarter was very good or excellent. Two lessons were excellent and no lessons were less than satisfactory.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 145 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (1%)	36 (25%)	75 (52%)	32 (22%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

30. Teaching and learning in music and design and technology are very good. Teachers in these subjects have a high level of expertise, plan the lessons with great care and engage students in interesting activities so that they thoroughly enjoy the experience. Resources are used extremely well in these subjects.
31. In the great majority of subjects, the teaching method supports the needs of all students well, so that achievement is generally good irrespective of ability or background. Teaching and learning have been less successful in science and ICT, but this has been due to staffing difficulties. The use of homework is generally good despite the concerns expressed by a few parents.
32. Relationships with students are good and contribute to the good achievement and progress made. In most subjects, the management of students' behaviour in lessons is at least good and often very good. Lessons normally involve a good variety of activity that maintains the students' interest and enthusiasm. ICT is used very well in some subjects such as mathematics and history to enhance the learning, but in others such as modern foreign languages and art and design opportunities are missed.
33. In general, both literacy and numeracy are practised in subjects, supporting the work done in the English and mathematics departments. The weakness, however, is the inattention given to developing speaking and listening skills. Insufficient opportunities are also provided to ensure active participation by students in discussion or to demand greater independence in the learning.
34. Students with special educational needs are well taught. There are good systems for assessing students' needs. Teachers and learning support assistants know their needs well and work is frequently modified to meet their needs. However, individual education plans do not always provide sufficient detail for needs to be effectively met in lessons. Learning support assistants are most helpful in class when they respond to a wide range of needs. Occasionally their attention is unnecessarily closely focused on one student so that the opportunity to help others is lost. Helpful ICT software supports the improvement of literacy and numeracy skills of students with special educational needs.
35. The school has established good procedures for identifying students with special gifts and talents. Provision for teaching these students is inconsistent, however. Some subjects ensure that teaching method and tasks are appropriate for these students and provision is good in English, mathematics and physical education and it is particularly strong in music and business studies. Booster classes and a summer school are arranged and extra-curricular activities are often an invaluable opportunity that is taken.

In several subjects, however, such as ICT, art and design, design and technology and history, the provision is not sufficient and opportunities, such as creating express groups, are lost.

36. The overall quality of the assessment of students' work is good. The marking of work is regular, thorough and accurate. In several departments, this practice is very good. For example, in English, teachers monitor and track individuals and groups with a well designed database which is then used to evaluate teaching and for assessment. There is also a well developed procedure for target setting and for providing individual comments aimed at improvement. In design and technology teachers make very good use of data, sharing evaluations with students to determine areas for improvement. The use of internal assessment criteria here is excellent. In business studies schemes of work have very detailed assessment information. Staff comments make very clear to students where improvement is needed and the students are very well supported by the effective use of an assessment pro forma. In music and art, individual target setting is used very effectively to raise standards.
37. All members of the school leadership group monitor the thoroughness of assessment in all departments on a regular basis. There has also been a strong emphasis on the development of thorough diagnostic comments rather than just a grade being recorded. This is having a positive impact on students' understanding of ways to improve their work in conjunction with the regular involvement of students in the self-evaluation of their work and relevant target setting. The school's aim is to ensure consistency of good practices in all areas so that the review of assessment procedures is a regular target for improvement in the annual improvement plans for all departments.

### **Sixth form**

38. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in the sixth form, as it is in the main school, as principle teachers share teaching in the different phases of the school. In some subjects students are very well motivated and these positive attitudes raise the effectiveness of the teaching. This is noticeable in science, design and technology and business studies. Very good resources, many being purchased through the funding the school receives as a Specialist Technology College, are used very effectively with the smaller sixth form groups.
39. Teachers have a high level of expertise and are able, therefore, to stimulate the learning of the most complex aspects of advanced level work. For example, the provision of further mathematics is popular with students as they are confident with the teachers' knowledge. As in the main school, there is not enough opportunity for the development of the students' oracy skills. Opportunities for challenging debate and argument are not sufficiently frequent. Independent learning needs to be further extended.
40. Teaching and learning on the vocational Business and Technology Education Council, (BTEC) early years course is very good. Practical interactive activities and work placements have a strong motivating effect on less academic students and the outcome is very good achievement. The teachers have excellent subject expertise and use external specialists to supplement the teaching.
41. Assessment in the sixth form is good overall and frequently very good. Very good use is made of performance data to track students' progress and set targets. Of the ten focus

subjects, the quality of assessment is very good in mathematics, biology, design and technology, art and design, music and business studies.

### **The curriculum**

42. The quality and range of the curriculum are good overall. Careers education is very good. Workplace learning is established. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum provision in a number of subject areas is hindered by unsatisfactory accommodation.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The breadth and balance of the curriculum are good overall and cater well for the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of the students.
- The range of sixth form academic and vocational courses available is good.
- The curriculum is hindered by the unsatisfactory accommodation.
- Careers education and guidance are very well planned and managed.
- The curriculum is enriched through a good range of extra-curricular activities.

### **Commentary**

43. The breadth and balance of the curriculum are good; the curriculum caters well for the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of the students. The management of the curriculum is good, with good support from the governors. Curricular planning is based on regular review processes, including a thorough analysis of performance data. Equality of access to the curriculum and equality of opportunity are very good.
44. Students receive a balanced education in Years 7 to 9 studying all the National Curriculum subjects, religious education and personal, social and health education, together with citizenship. There is an opportunity to study a second language for those who show a particular aptitude. Good opportunities for extra-curricular activities are provided.
45. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is good overall. The school offers a wide range of GCSE subjects in Years 10 and 11. The most able students in science can study three separate GCSE courses in biology, chemistry and physics. An ethics GCSE short course is provided for all students to fulfil the requirements for religious education. Drama and physical education may be taken to GCSE level. Work-related learning has been introduced since the previous inspection and vocational options are being extended but development is limited by the lack of suitable accommodation.
46. Careers education is very well planned and taught through the PSHE programme, citizenship and in tutor sessions. Students in Year 11 are made very clear about courses in the sixth form, alternative college courses, modern apprenticeships and employment linked with training. As well as the very good careers advice and guidance, students have the opportunity to study business studies, child development and ICT, which provide popular and worthwhile vocational links at GCSE. Art and design is offered as a vocational GCSE subject and a small number of students take vocational courses at the local college. The work experience provided for all Year 10 students successfully prepares them for future employment.

47. The school makes good provision for students with special educational needs. Their needs are well met in their lessons because work is well matched to the individual students. A small number of students with special educational needs attend classes to help them to improve literacy and numeracy skills. They learn well because of the close attention they are given. Occasionally students do not learn as well as they should in these sessions because they no longer require the level of support they receive.
48. All departments are implementing a school policy so that all subjects provide for students with special talents and gifts. Talented and gifted students in the sixth form take critical thinking as an additional AS level course. In recent years the school has run a summer school for students with special gifts and talents. In 2004, over 40 students learned video production skills.
49. Although the percentage of students whose first language is not English is higher than in most schools, only one student has been identified as being at the early stages of acquiring English as an additional language. Those needing some additional support to develop their language skills are identified by a well-managed system, which goes on to check their progress against appropriate individual targets. Additional staff are also deployed well where necessary, to prompt and support students as they work alongside others in ordinary classes.
50. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities which augment the curriculum and allow students to enhance their learning and develop personal and social qualities. The school closely monitors student involvement in these activities with the intention of maximising student participation. Last May the whole school responded to a questionnaire, which yielded data on the level of present involvement and requests for further activities. There is good academic support for learning through subject clubs and lunchtime booster classes and a gifted and talented school was held in the summer holidays. Sporting and artistic activities make a significant contribution to students' lives both during the school day and afterwards. Last year an activity day was held when students in Years 7 to 9 participated in a range of different activities, including outdoor adventure, climbing, sports coaching and water sports. Technology college status has also had a positive impact on extra-curricular activities enabling the students to participate, for example, in Mathematics Challenge. Evening classes in a range of activities for the wider curriculum are available.
51. Accommodation overall in the school is unsatisfactory. Governors are well aware of the problems and a new block, which will also house the sixth form and the library, is currently under construction. There are accommodation issues in a number of subjects; in science there are insufficient laboratories; some are too small and they are not suited for technical and support staff to be used to the best effect. In design and technology the fixed classroom furniture hinders the sharing of ideas and makes the room unsuitable as a design studio. The lack of specialist accommodation in drama and music adversely affects achievement. There are also problems with catering facilities, which were designed for a school less than half the current size. There are, however, some compensating strengths in business education and mathematics.
52. Learning resources overall, including books, equipment and materials, are satisfactory. The school's technology status has resulted in a very good ratio of computers to students. In mathematics resources are excellent. The ICT facility is well above average and well used. ICT provision has improved in science since the last inspection, but its use is

constrained because of accommodation problems. There is a lack of interactive whiteboards in history and physical education is without a digital camera; it has sparse ICT facilities. Computers are not always available or sufficient in modern foreign languages. Texts and materials are plentiful in religious education but visual equipment is limited. Most equipment in music is good but the subject lacks multicultural instruments and, more contemporary resources are needed in German. Not all students have textbooks to take home but there is usually a good supply of class sets of most texts.

53. The school now has a good and effective team of well qualified and enthusiastic teachers whose skills and experience match the needs of the curriculum well. This is a good improvement. Difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff have been overcome because of effective planning to target consistency in staffing, as a key to improving standards and achievement. In the past year the school has experienced difficulty with recruiting and retaining staff and this had a detrimental effect on continuity of teaching in a number of subjects.
54. Overall provision of support staff in school is good. There is an adequate number of learning support assistants (LSAs) to meet the needs of students identified with special educational needs. LSAs have a considerable range of experience and make a good contribution to students' learning. Technical support staff are well trained and well deployed. Administrative and site staff provide a very good service to the school and are contributing well to the workforce reform initiative.

## **SIXTH FORM**

55. The sixth form curriculum offers a wide range of academic and vocational courses, which prepare students very well for university or employment. It is an inclusive sixth form and one in which curricular provision is good. The school offers a wide range of GCSE AS and A-level courses and a number of vocational courses. However, statutory requirements for religious education are not met as too little time is allocated in the sixth form.
56. The school prepares the students very well for their future by responding to students' interests and adjusting the subjects offered. Vocational courses (advanced vocational certificate in education, AVCE) in travel and tourism, art and business studies, for example, have all been recently introduced. The school aims to meet the needs of individuals, for example in business studies, where students can choose the intermediate GNVQ or advanced courses. There is also a very successful BTEC course in early years nursery nursing, which matches the career aspirations of 25 students. The visits organised to university open days are valuable and the students value the presentations by outside speakers. The range of options available to sixth formers, particularly the vocational options, enables students with special educational needs to benefit from post-16 education.
57. The academic programme is well supplemented by a very good range of enrichment opportunities to which all students have open access. Where students might experience financial hardship, funding is available. The different departments organise a wide range of trips and there is a sixth form ski trip and a residential trip to Dartmoor. Brunel University personnel visit the school annually to promote university entrance; local council candidates come to the school and psychology students are partnered with a firm, which develops psychometric testing packages. The school is very keen for the sixth formers to

be active both in the school itself - for example, acting as officers for the school council and organising functions - and also in the community where some regularly visit a school for students with learning difficulties every week. Sixth form students also act as mentors in the lower school; for example, in the paired reading scheme and in drama, physical education, design and technology, information and communication technology and music where they organise groups, gaining experience in this field and acting as good role models for the younger members.

58. Accommodation in the sixth form is unsatisfactory at the present time although best use has been made of the private study facilities. Resources for learning in the sixth form are good. Sixth form students have good access to ICT in general and to the computer facilities in the library to help their research.

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

The school takes very good care of its students throughout the school. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is very good. Systems to involve students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Comprehensive procedures vigorously followed ensure very good health and safety within the school.
- The very good pastoral and welfare structure within the school ensures that all students are very well cared for.
- Tutors and external agencies provide very good support and guidance.
- Good induction arrangements enable students to settle very quickly into the school.
- There are good structured committees to enable students to express their views although feedback on their proposals does not always get back to all students.

### **Commentary**

59. The school has very good procedures for child protection in place and ensures that all staff are aware of requirements. The child protection officer is named in procedures. The school works well with external agencies and has systems in place to support the seven children who are in the care of the local authority. A very strong feature of the school is the way it follows up absence to ensure the safety and welfare of the students. If a student fails to arrive at school and notification is not received the school uses an automatic message system to contact parents early in the day to confirm the student's safety, - every effort is made to contact parents by telephoning each of the contact numbers in the student's file.
60. Health and safety are a high priority in the school and the comprehensive procedures are very well managed. Risk assessments and audits are carried out for all areas and very good secure records kept of all the checks carried out. Caring pastoral staff and support staff provide very good welfare facilities. The full-time welfare assistant and a number of first aid staff make very good medical provision and receive appropriate training as required. The school has a fully equipped and dedicated medical room.
61. The level of support, advice and guidance that students receive is very good and reflects the wide variety of opportunities on offer in the school. Whenever possible students will

have the same form tutor throughout their life in the school. This means that teachers know the students well and support is very well informed. Impartial guidance on further study and careers opportunities is also very good. Much of this comes through timetabled personal, social, health and citizenship education lessons, interviews with careers advisors and work experience programmes. Close liaison with the Connexions career service ensures that students and their parents have maximum access to careers guidance. An advisor is in school for three days each week and ensures that advice is well targeted to individual needs. The careers section of the library provides good resources. At the end of Year 10 all students spend two weeks on work experience. Arrangements for work placements are made through the Hillingdon Education and Business Partnership, which provides a high quality service. A small number of students undertake vocational courses at the local college and a group of students in Year 10 take a vocational course in art and design. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, starting in Year 7, helps students make their choices for study in Year 9 and ensures that Year 11 students have enough information to make informed choices about their future education or employment.

62. There are good systems to help Year 7 students settle quickly into the school with visits during the previous term as well as guidance from tutors. The inspection took place at the beginning of the school year and the new students were very satisfied with the induction process and were seen to be settling very quickly, with guidance readily available when they needed it.
63. There is a school 'Forum' which enables students to meet to discuss school issues and make proposals for events or any improvements to the school, which are then presented to the leadership team. Whilst decisions are notified to the students the detailed reasons why their proposals have been accepted or rejected are not always made known.
64. Special needs teachers and learning support assistants know students with special educational needs well so that these students are confident in working with staff.

## **SIXTH FORM**

65. In the sixth form students receive very good support, guidance and advice. Careers advice and university entrance guidance, including that for Oxbridge applicants, is very well targeted to the needs of the individual. Students find the careers guidance they receive very helpful. Involvement in the organisation of the school is increased through a sixth form committee and through sixth formers holding roles as officers of the school forum.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY**

The school has good links with parents and very good links with the community and with other educational establishments.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good links are forged with other educational establishments through the specialist technology college status.

- Very good links are made with industry and the local community to enhance the curriculum.
- Parents are kept very well informed about the school and about the progress of their children.
- There is a good partnership with parents but formal consultation opportunities about whole school issues are not fully developed.

## **Commentary**

66. There is a good partnership with parents most of whom are very supportive of the school, especially the leadership, the teaching, the high expectations and the way the school helps students settle in. A significant number are concerned about homework, the lack of opportunities to express their views and the information they receive about progress of their children. Parents also identified some bad behaviour and bullying within the school and a few parents are concerned about the welfare provision. The concerns raised by parents were considered during the inspection and contribute to the findings in the report.
67. The information to parents on the progress that students make in their subjects comprises a good report each year supported by a parents' evening. Parents also receive a good quality prospectus and the governors' annual report together with informative well produced newsletters. The governors' annual report meets statutory requirements but the sections on special educational needs and the long-term disability access plan should be expanded to be more helpful to parents. Attendance at parents' evenings is good but attendance at the governors' annual meeting is poor. The school uses a very good planner for students to allow parents to monitor the work and to communicate with the school and this is well used. The school has a very strong parents' association, which raises significant funds and holds social functions. Whilst parents have good opportunities to come into school to discuss their children's progress, the formal consultation with parents about their views on whole school issues is an area that could be developed to produce an even stronger partnership.
68. The school has utilised its technology college status to build up very good partnerships with other schools to the benefit of all. This includes providing teaching time in primary schools as well as technical support. Joint activities are organised for both the local primary schools and for the secondary schools within the borough. The close links with the primary feeder schools support the smooth transfer of pupils from these schools but not all departments have yet developed curriculum links with these feeder schools. The school has established very good links with other institutions to support the development of the 14-19 curriculum. The school also works well with teacher training providers.
69. The co-coordinator for special educational needs attends review meetings at primary schools. This leads to the school having good information about the special needs of students before they enter the school. Consequently, these students make a good start to their new school. There are valuable inputs from a number of agencies helping, for example, visually impaired students.
70. The community benefits from the school providing evening classes and sports facilities. Local industry provides sponsorship as well as providing expertise to the school to support its technology status and supports the curriculum by providing work experience opportunities. Students benefit from a good range of visits within the community and from visiting speakers supporting the curriculum. Other strong community links include

fund raising for both local and national charities and a partnership with the police who have a community officer based in the school for part of the week.

71. A video producer and representatives from the police helped gifted and talented students in their summer school. Many parents attended the 'world premiere' of the videos, which the gifted and talented students had made.

## **Sixth form**

72. In addition to the main school partnerships there are strong links developed in the sixth form for curriculum provision. Consortium arrangements have been created to enable students to study law and there are links with Buckingham and Chilterns University to enhance technology courses. Community links are also very strong with work experience placements for students undertaking the BTEC course in early years in local nurseries. External nursing professionals also teach on the course.

## **Leadership and Management**

Leadership of the school is very good. The headteacher has a very clear sense of purpose and understanding of the needs of the school. Leadership by all key staff including heads of department is very focused on raising students' achievement. Governors are very committed and provide a good level of support. Overall management is very effective.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' achievements are the focus of the school's leadership and management.
- The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff is very good.
- Governors provide high commitment to supporting the school.
- Financial management procedures are very secure.

## **Commentary**

73. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. He has a clear vision, which he communicates to staff and students. Raising achievement of all students is central to this vision. The senior staff support the headteacher effectively and their work as a team is acknowledged by other staff, for whom it provides a good example. This leadership has led to high staff and student morale. The leadership of middle leaders is good. They share the headteacher's determination to raise achievement. The senior team has used a variety of innovative solutions to ensure the good quality of its middle leaders, including sharing the responsibility in some departments and using very experienced senior leaders to coach new heads of department.
74. Governance of the school is good. Governors are highly committed and committees are active. Most governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide good support to the senior staff. The governing body is well informed about the provision for students with special educational needs by a link governor who visits the school termly. Governors respect and trust the decisions of the headteacher but also initiate, discuss and challenge proposed development. Time constraints and work commitments limit the proactive contribution and involvement of some governors. Individual governors visit the school on a regular basis and spend time in departments. However, governors have not ensured that all students undertake a daily

act of collective worship, or that religious education is provided for all students in the sixth form.

75. Management of the school is very good. The school has a whole school and departmental system of self-evaluation within its well established planning cycle. This is informed by the observation of lessons by senior and middle leaders. Data analysis is good. Most departments use it well in the formal discussions about the department's effectiveness with their link senior leader. The options system is managed very well to ensure Year 10 students are provided with the courses that they choose and the timetable makes an effective use of the teaching staff. The start of term was organised in an exemplary way to ensure that all students were engaged in learning by the second period of the school year.
76. The new co-ordinator for special educational needs provides good leadership. She is very enthusiastic about the work and provides good advice to other teachers. She has worked hard to build a good team spirit amongst learning support assistants. Management of the education of students with special needs is satisfactory. Needs are well identified and the school complies with the 'Code of Practice'. However, the detailed monitoring of students' progress is only commencing and the co-ordinator has to spend considerable amounts of time on administrative tasks because of very limited clerical support. The provision for gifted and talented students is well led and managed by a member of the senior leadership team. The governing body has adopted a policy for the education of these students.
77. The commitment by senior staff on the leadership team and those leading departments is strong and focused on raising achievement. The school is very determined to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Monitoring and observation of teaching are a clear part of performance management and are also used to identify the teaching strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers. The use of performance data is promoted at senior management level and the wider use of data by heads of department and by teachers is steadily improving.
78. The performance management of teachers is very well established and has been highlighted by Hillingdon LEA as good practice. The review cycle is linked into the school improvement plan. Members of the non-teaching staff also have performance management reviews. All aspects of teaching, learning and performance are managed by an efficient structure of line management and mentor support, which celebrates success and takes action where improvement is needed.
79. New teachers to the profession are given a very effective induction programme which they report is useful and gives them the opportunity to request additional training. New teachers to the school are given the option of training and are assigned a mentor in their first weeks. The school provides very good access to professional development for all teaching and non-teaching staff. The 'Well Being' review identified the success of development opportunities. In addition, the sharing of information by teachers when a course has been completed helps development and consistency within the department.
80. Site staff and administration staff are well prepared for the workforce reform initiative, because of very good training and effective deployment. They are well managed and feel valued as vital members of the school team.

81. The school contributes very well to initial teacher training through its links with local higher education. The senior leaders work hard on recruitment and retention of staff and have successfully appointed well qualified and enthusiastic staff into the school. This area was problematic but now recruitment and retention are healthy and the school is attracting very good quality teachers.
82. The school has very good approaches to financial management, one reason for the improvements noted in this report. The surplus in the school's account has been carefully nurtured to pay for much needed maintenance, such as a new boiler, electrical wiring and the like by several years of careful management. The school maintains a very good oversight of the agent's work in managing the capital project at the school in an effort to keep overall costs within budget. Best value principles are applied excellently in the school's approaches to the management of resources, seen in the recent purchase of a significant amount of ICT equipment. Detailed analysis is made of income/expenditure on different aspects of the school's work, such as the sixth form and spending on provision for special educational needs etcetera. The sixth form is cost effective. This attention to detail is a major factor in the school's delivery of very good value for money.

### Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,669,653	Balance from previous year	376,543
Total expenditure	4,319,045	Balance carried forward to the next year	727,151
Expenditure per student	3,554		

### SIXTH FORM

83. The good leadership and management of the main school extend into the sixth form. The head of sixth form has a strong commitment to development and is very effective in managing the diverse range of academic and vocational opportunities for students. The same commitment to inclusion in the main school is found in the sixth form and all students are valued and supported.
84. Induction into the sixth form is well managed. Each week a small group of students are interviewed and form tutors hold regular meetings to resolve problems. Good monitoring of the progress of students is carried out and performance is evaluated against the targets based on prior attainment at GCSE and ability test scores when they entered the school. Analysis is very thorough.
85. Students have been concerned about frequent staff changes and are now pleased that staffing is more settled. There is a good feel about the organisation and management of the sixth form. They feel there is always someone to talk to about their courses or university application. The careers programme is comprehensive and some students benefit from work experience as part of the course.
86. The head of sixth form and other senior staff monitor the work of tutors well. They visit tutorials and look at student diaries. The tutor team is strong and works closely together.

87. The accommodation for the sixth form has been unsatisfactory. However the leadership team and governors have successfully bid for funding that has enabled the present construction of a new sixth form block with modern and extensive facilities.

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

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

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

##### **English**

Overall, provision in English is **good**.

##### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Very good results are obtained at higher-grade GCSE levels.
- Very good quality of advice is given to students which helps them to know how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Boys' attainment has risen as a result of teaching content adapted well to their interests and needs.
- Good achievement results from varied teaching methods.
- Speaking and listening skills are underdeveloped because teachers do not provide the challenge or help that students need to explain ideas at length.
- Lower attaining students suffer from underdeveloped basic skills because teachers do not focus on their needs vigorously enough.

##### **COMMENTARY**

88. Results in 2003 in national tests taken at end of Year 9 were in line with the national average overall and for the proportion reaching at or above the expected level (Level 5). Over three years, girls did better than boys, reflecting the national picture, but boys exceeded the national attainment level for boys while girls matched the attainment level for girls. Results revealed attainment well below that found in schools with a similar prior attainment on entry in Year 7. The most recent results for 2004 show improvement, particularly for the proportion of those reaching or exceeding the expected level.

89. The proportion of students reaching higher grades (A\*-C) in English at GCSE in 2003 was above that found nationally. Girls exceeded the national average for their gender, while boys matched it. Results in 2004 maintained this standard. English literature results were significantly better than those found nationally, both for the proportion gaining higher grades and overall.
90. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are average overall. Standards of writing are average, but demonstrate good achievement. Students benefit from well set, challenging assignments which engage their interests and curiosity. Higher attaining students write fluently, employing complex sentence structure, assured spelling and the ability to lay out their thoughts logically in paragraphs. Students with special educational needs achieve well overall, but suffer from an insecure grasp of spelling, because teaching techniques are not fully adapted to help them tackle the problem.
91. Standards of reading are average. Teachers plan well to ensure that students read and appreciate a good range of plays, fiction and poetry, so that they understand reasonably the importance of central characters and key events and themes.
92. Standards of speaking are below average. While students listen well and answer questions succinctly, they rarely expand their answers because teachers' questioning misses opportunities to help them extend their contributions and thinking.
93. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average overall and show good achievement. At the same time, boys' levels of attainment have risen and are similar to those of the girls as a consequence of teaching methods that build on their interests to ensure that they participate more independently and thoughtfully in lessons. Students are showing increasing perseverance when exploring new ideas, whether collaborating to analyse texts, or sharing ideas in discussion. The written work of higher attainers demonstrates the ability to respond to challenging assignments, dealing with books, films and persuasive writing with confidence, lucidity and the ability to explore ideas independently. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs achieve in line with others, but continue to suffer from insecure skills of sentence structure and punctuation and do not spell consistently because of a lack of focused teaching in these areas. Students using English as an additional language achieve in line with their peers.
94. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers employ a variety of methods and activities which engage students by challenging their thinking and building on their curiosity. Assessment procedures are very good and students receive very good advice on how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve.
95. Good leadership has ensured that teachers work well together as a team by sharing ideas and making use of national initiatives to improve teaching. Good management has established useful systems to check how well groups of students are doing. They are used productively to enable teachers to collaborate to improve methods. Better provision for gifted and talented students has helped to increase the proportion of students gaining higher grades. It follows that the subject has improved well since the last inspection.

## LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

96. Standards of literacy are above average, with the exception of speaking and listening. Writing is generally accurate and well laid out and most students read very well for information and enjoyment. In design and technology, writing is used well to explore and evaluate ideas, although in science it is under exploited. Standards of speaking and listening overall are below expectation and well below those of reading and writing. They vary greatly, from poor to occasionally very good, across the subjects. Opportunities are missed as teachers often provide too little emphasis on discussion and debate. For example, while some teachers are adept at structuring and extending discussion to help students explore and refine ideas, others are too accepting of monosyllabic answers from their students, lacking the depth, thought or development of which they are capable. In mathematics, science and some history lessons, discussion opportunities are very limited. On the other hand, they are well promoted in business studies, music, design and technology, religious and physical education and drama. The lack of oral skill in several areas of the curriculum is hindering the development of independent thought and affecting achievement. A sound school policy and working documents provide good advice on the teaching of literacy across the school. However, the advice is applied inconsistently, so that there is too much variation in the quality of the teaching and learning of literacy.

### Modern foreign languages

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and opportunities in modern foreign languages are rising, due to very good leadership and management of the department.
- Good, consistent teaching is turning around the erratic learning and attitudes associated with a period when many temporary teachers taught the subject.
- The languages team is young and enthusiastic, ambitious to see students succeed.
- Access to ICT is restricted, due, in part, to constraints in accommodation.

### Commentary

97. Results at GCSE in 2003 were below average overall: average in German, but well below average in French. Boys' results were not as high as those of girls, reflecting the picture nationally. Unconfirmed results for 2004 show a marked increase in A\*-C grades in French, bringing results in both languages broadly to the national average.
98. At the end of Year 9, standards observed in both languages meet the national expectations. Students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. In Year 11 standards seen are in line with the national expectations. This represents good achievement, given the range of teacher assessment grades at the end of Year 9 in 2003. Students with special educational needs and those designated as gifted and talented follow the same pattern of achievement. Students with English as an additional language acquire new linguistic skills well, achieving well in Years 7 to 9, too.
99. Teaching and learning are now good in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Teaching in both French and German encourages a clear sense of routine and insistence on high standards of behaviour and presentation. Teaching is systematic and consistent, using a good range of approaches to help students relate oral, written and comprehension tasks

in lessons. The strong use of the target language challenges students to think in the language of the lesson. Literacy skills in English are addressed through reflection on points of grammar and by comparing aspects of the target language with English. Lessons move at a good pace, but often at the cost of promoting full-sentence oral responses and accurate pronunciation. Homework is set regularly. In marking and monitoring written work in class, not all errors are made explicit to students and rectified, a factor which accounts for few students achieving higher grades at GCSE. While there are good assessment procedures in place, including the regular reporting of National Curriculum grades, students need to negotiate their targets more thoroughly for them to be fully effective. Students of different abilities are all appropriately supported, whether classes are mixed ability or set. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good in all years.

100. Leadership and management of the department are good. Two thirds of the teachers have less than 15 months teaching experience. However, a strong team spirit has been rapidly established, galvanised through very good induction and monitoring procedures. The staff comprises almost exclusively teachers able to teach both French and German, so the department is now able to set groups by aptitude in several years and to offer both French and German to four classes in Year 8, tailoring the curriculum very effectively to students' learning needs and aspirations. With four further languages spoken by the staff, there is evident capacity to extend provision further. Out-of-hours taster courses in some of these languages have been offered. Provision is also supplemented by trips to Germany and by the provision of a foreign language assistant. There is no reading scheme and the library is under used. While accommodation is good and most teachers are able to use a dedicated suite with motivating and helpful displays, sharing one of these rooms with another department limits students' access to ICT and causes some disruption through the need to move from one room to another.

101. Since the previous inspection, the school has arrested a decline in standards and the department is well placed to make further improvements.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of leadership and management is very good, responsible for the very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Teaching is consistently good, so students achieve well.
- The use of assessment data enables the teaching to focus very well on students' needs.
- The oral contributions of some students in some lessons are not yet good enough.

### **Commentary**

102. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 performance was average in relation to all schools but well below the average of similar schools, based on students' previous performance in the Year 6 tests. Performance is improving in line with national trends and improved further in 2004, exceeding the school targets for the subject. Performance was above average in 2003 in comparison with that in similar schools based on the number of students with free school meals, similar to the standards in science and better than those in English. There was no significant difference between the performance of

boys and girls. In the 2003 GCSE examination at the end of Year 11 standards were well above average for the number of students with grades A\* - C and above average overall. This performance was repeated in 2004, a notable feature being the number of students with the highest A\*/A grades, doubling the figure for 2003. Mathematics is one of the better performing subjects in the school. Standards have improved since the last inspection.

103. Standards seen in Year 9 support the rising trend seen in the results. The achievement of students in Year 9 is good because the teaching is consistently good and standards are now above average. Basic mathematical work is consolidated well. The achievement of students in Year 11 is also good because the teaching is consistently good. Standards at this stage are now well above average. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls, or students with special needs, of those whose first language is not English and of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. Standards in literacy are average. Standards in ICT in mathematics are above average because of the excellent provision of resources available for teaching purposes. The National Numeracy Strategy is well established, with the result that numeracy levels are as expected, or better, for most students.
104. Teaching and learning are consistently good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The teachers work hard and very well together, which explains why the teaching is good throughout the department and why standards are rising. Subject expertise and the planning of lessons are strengths in the teaching. Students in some lessons do not contribute orally well enough for their learning to be better than good. This is because the teachers' questions allow short answers rather than more extended explanations that show understanding, or the lack of it. Performance data is used very well in the teaching arrangements, enabling a very good focus on students' individual needs in lessons. Resources for teaching are excellent now that computer-controlled whiteboards are in use in every classroom. Their full potential has yet to be realised.
105. The quality of leadership and management is very good, responsible for the establishment of a very good team of enthusiastic teachers under the joint leadership of two teachers, who share responsibilities very well. The curriculum is good, with the quality of students' coursework a particularly strong feature. The monitoring of the department's work is very good, especially the monitoring of teaching and the very good use of assessment data. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

106. Students' competence in mathematics has been rising in the recent past and is now well above average. In design and technology and geography, where mathematics is most widely used, students demonstrate above average skills in using charts, graphs and statistics. Working to scale is well developed in design and technology by the end of Year 11. Graphs are used very well. Standards are also above average in business studies and ICT in the use of spreadsheets, charts and graphs. Standards are average in art where exercises develop the rules of perspective and establish pattern making in printing techniques. Students meet many mathematical concepts in their work in science that are not developed sufficiently well in science lessons to help raise understanding and performance.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Above average test results, achieved in Year 9, provide a useful platform for driving up standards in Years 10 and 11.
- Learning is made interesting through teachers' specialist knowledge; but the creative involvement of students in lessons is limited, which stunts understanding.
- Students with special educational needs achieve well because of teachers' helpful comments on their work and the skilful support of their assistants. Generally, the rate of progress for others is a little too slow.
- Students' good attitudes towards tackling work enrich their learning, but their skills of investigation are not developed early enough during class experiments.

### **Commentary**

107. Year 9 results in 2003 were above the national average but well below average when compared with the results in schools with a similar level of attainment on entry. Boys and girls did equally well. Provisional results in 2004 have declined since the previous year. As a group, however, Year 9 students met their target for reaching Level 5. GCSE results at grades A\*-C were just below average. Girls performed better than boys in double science but considerably more boys chose to study the separate subjects; six girls chose the triple option in 2003 and four in 2004. When double and triple award scores are combined, provisional results at grades A\*-C for 2004 show a significant decline since last year. Staffing difficulties have detrimentally affected standards and individual students' achievement.

108. Current standards seen in Year 9 are average and, overall, achievement is satisfactory. The progress made is strongly linked to the quality of teaching. Students with special educational needs make good progress because assistant teachers, generally, are highly skilled in their support and their teachers write comprehensive, helpful comments on their work to help their learning. Higher attaining students explain reasons for chemical reactions well through accurately deduced symbolic equations although work planned for them does not always match their capability and so their progress slows down. It also slows down when students answer questions from worksheets rather than widening their technical vocabulary in explaining conclusions themselves. The skilled use of computers, however, has improved since the last inspection.

109. Standards seen are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory with wide variations in the standards of current Year 11 students. Students' writing and modular test results confirm an unsatisfactory picture about standards and achievement over the past year. This is mainly due to the unsettled nature of teaching experienced by these students. Books also show that, when teachers use their specialist knowledge well, higher attainers successfully grasp complex ideas to deepen learning. Difficulties in understanding occur when students cannot picture an idea in their 'mind's eye' because ineffective planning has omitted apt resources to help their imagination. At the very early stage of a new term, good attitudes in Year 10 and 11 classes are found and are helping progress. For example, in Year 10 students are keen to learn, cheerfully attending to their teacher's competent presentation about electrical circuitry. They know what is needed to be measured and why and successfully use new apparatus to do so. Observation and

practical skills are developing well but conclusions lack depth. Achievement in Years 10-11 is improving and from evidence obtained during the inspection is now satisfactory.

110. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. A strength is the teachers' subject expertise. It was used successfully to lead a Year 11 class through a series of well-planned steps in their learning about species variation and Year 8 students in deciding whether or not jelly is a liquid or solid. Although a focus is not selected, marking is consistent, usually with good quality comments that help students in their learning. Students' keenness to learn and achieve well was also seen to play a major part in raising their standards. Good lessons had a fast pace throughout; time was not wasted. Shortcomings apply to the poor planning of ideas and narrow teaching methods that do not sufficiently, creatively involve students in lessons. Work of high attaining students within sets does not always match their capability and expectations, generally, about presentation are too low. There is scope for more independent investigative work in science to improve the students' understanding of experimental method; teachers guide experiments too much.
111. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A new head of department is already being supported well by colleagues in analysing current performance. Targets for improvement are being swiftly identified. Strong collaboration within the team is countering some of the problems caused by difficulties in staffing. After a period of decline improvement since the last inspection is broadly satisfactory and there is great capacity for further improvement. ICT provision and curriculum time for Years 7 and 8 have improved and current behaviour, generally, is good. Accommodation and the siting of laboratories away from a central base remain a problem and there is still limited extra-curricular enrichment. Classroom observations need to focus more sharply upon links between teaching and learning to develop a wider range of methods. Analysis and the use of test and examination information need further development to track students' achievement, set targets and contribute to planning so as to build on the good assessment and analysis of performance data carried out centrally in the school.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good leadership and management have established a good basis to develop the subject.
- Very good equipment and resources help students learn.
- Teachers do not have sufficient information when taking over a class to set work at the right level.
- Higher attaining students do not get sufficient opportunities to explore the subject in depth.

### **Commentary**

112. The standard of work seen from students in Year 9 is below national expectations as is that from students in Year 11. These standards represent unsatisfactory achievement over time. However, these standards also reflect the consequences in recent years of a high turnover of teaching staff. This has severely disrupted students' learning. Although

girls gained higher GCSE results than boys in 2003 and 2004, no difference in the standard of boys' and girls' work was seen in the inspection. Students with special educational needs achieve at the same rate as other students. Students from minority ethnic groups achieve higher standards than other students because they have more positive attitudes to their work. Higher achieving students have not achieved as much as expected because they have not been given sufficient opportunities to explore the subject in depth and so achieve the highest grades. Staffing difficulties that have led to standards not being as high as at the time of the previous inspection have now been resolved.

113. Teaching and learning are now both satisfactory and the current rate of progress is improved. Following extensive efforts by the school, well-qualified teachers with good knowledge of ICT have been recruited. The best teaching engages the interest of students through well-chosen activities. Students in Year 8 quickly grasped the concept of computer control through a lively computer presentation, taking part in a quiz about a car park barrier and then answering a well-structured set of questions about everyday equipment such as washing machines. Learning is less effective when the teacher presents too much information before the students start individual work, leading to a loss of interest. Although, until the start of the present school year students had not achieved as much as they should, they are now learning at the expected rate, boding well for the future. Students' work is satisfactorily assessed. A new system of assessment is being introduced and this should provide students with much better information on the progress they are making and on how to improve their work further. Currently, when teachers take over a new class, they do not always have sufficient information on what the students have already learnt, making planning more difficult and learning less effective.
114. A new head of department took up post at the start of the term of the inspection. He provides good leadership, building upon the laudable efforts of the school to solve their staffing problems. The head of department has very clear plans about how to improve standards in the subject and has already made substantial changes such as changing the way in which GCSE coursework is done and improving assessment. His enthusiasm is infectious. Although his staff are all new to the school, he has already gained detailed knowledge of each member and is developing a strong team spirit so that staff are well supported. Management of the subject is good because there are good systems in place to ensure that learning improves.

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

115. The school has made very good progress in significantly increasing the number of computers and is much better equipped than most schools. A highly capable team of technicians manages ICT resources so that their operation and reliability of use in teaching are secure. Very good use is made of computers in some subjects, including mathematics and history, where they make a very telling contribution to students' learning. In music, compositional skills are being developed using newly acquired computerised keyboards, allowing students to record and refine their compositions before printing them out. In art, younger students do not make the required use of ICT. In all subjects, students display good levels of ICT competency to meet the demands made of them.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

The provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching is leading to good achievement.
- The development of fieldwork in contrasting environments extends what is learnt in the classroom.
- There is good leadership and management of a forward-looking department.
- Very good assessment is used to track student performance and aid planning.
- Boys' performance does not reach similar levels to that of girls.
- The work set for gifted and talented students has matched their needs well in extending their performance.

### **Commentary**

116. In 2003 the percentage of A\*-C grades at GCSE was below the national average and slightly below that of other subjects. The dip is against a general upward trend and results for 2004 show improvement.
117. Many students enter the school with limited geographical skills. By the end of Year 9, standards are about in line with the national average. Student achievement relative to prior attainment is good. Students in their work and group discussions showed that they had a good understanding of geographical processes and the impact of these on the environment. Higher attaining students work well but need to be carefully monitored while working. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress, especially when supported, towards reaching their targets. The work seen of girls is at a slightly higher level than the boys, although the differences are not great. The promotion of geographical literacy is helping to develop the students' language skills and exercises involving numeracy are helped by their work in mathematics.
118. Standards are above the national average at the end of Year 11, representing good achievement in relation to standards at the end of Year 9. Students are making good progress in their geographical knowledge, understanding and use of geographical skills. Students in their writing show a good understanding of the appropriate vocabulary and use their skills with maps, diagrams and graphs well to convey their ideas.
119. The quality of teaching and learning is good and the wider aspects of assessment for learning, monitoring and marking for purpose are very good. Well-planned lessons with appropriate learning objectives draw on an appropriate range of resources providing a variety of activities, which stimulate students' interest and help learning. Good questioning and good oral assessment helps them to understand their learning. ICT is used well to support learning and its use encouraged for research. Opportunities to take responsibility for their learning are there and most students take them. Marking is regular with some very useful feedback to students to help them understand how to improve their work. Classroom displays celebrate students' successes and encourage good learning.
120. Subject leadership and management are good. The leader has the appropriate vision and knows the direction to take in order to carry the department forward. The department works well as a team and their teaching is carefully monitored. Schemes of work are being reviewed to see that they meet present needs. Fieldwork now enhances the work

done in the classroom using contrasting environments. The subject has successfully addressed all the key issues of the last report.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of good teaching.
- Work set is insufficiently varied to realise the full potential of all ability levels.
- Positive attitudes and good behaviour make a significant contribution to learning.
- Individual research and enquiry-based methods actively involve students in their own learning.
- More comprehensive marking will enable students to improve their standards of literacy.

## Commentary

121. In the 2003 GCSE examinations two-thirds of candidates gained A\* to C grades, which was above the national average; girls did considerably better than boys with only one achieving less than a C, whereas only half of the boys reached that standard. In 2004 the gap between boys and girls narrowed dramatically but the overall pass rate fell by ten per cent.

122. Students enter the school with below average attainment and achieve well to reach standards broadly in line with expectations by Year 9. Higher-attaining students complete some good quality extended writing on challenging questions such as “Was appeasement a mistake?” and all undertake detailed historical enquiries into topics such as the 1984 Brighton bomb. Students with special educational needs also achieve well.

123. In Year 11 standards of work are in line with expectations. Students' coursework is well presented and always word-processed. Students use subject-specific terminology appropriately in expressing ideas and findings although there are too many errors in their written English, some of which remain uncorrected by teachers. In response to a video clip on the American Civil Rights movement, perceptive comments were offered by students on the differing attitudes of the northern and southern states, together with worthwhile conjecture about why that might be so. A significant role in their good achievement is clearly played by students' good behaviour and the positive way in which they respond to each other and their teachers.

124. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and sometimes very good. In the best lessons, teachers continually challenge their students to think, make links and explain, but even in these there is scope for raising standards by ensuring that there is always a variety of assignments and learning styles to extend students of all ability levels. Teachers are confident, energetic and lively in their presentation and clear and consistent in their expectations. They produce good quality study support materials and set homework regularly. They monitor the attention and effort of their students closely.

125. The subject is well managed and led. The head of department has worked hard on the history website and is developing improved assessment materials. There is a strong team of specialist teachers with a good mix of skills and experience although there is

scope for formalising and improving the rigour of procedures for the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and learning. The department has cramped accommodation and often hot and stuffy conditions in which students work and this hinders achievement. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and contributes well to students' achievement.
- Examination results in GCSE are above average.
- The contribution made by the subject to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good.
- Not enough is done to use assessment data to inform the planning of new work and track students' progress.

### Commentary

126. Results in the GCSE short course in ethics were above average in 2003. Students achieved 61 per cent grades A\* - C. This compares favourably with results in similar schools. In 2004, a similar picture emerged with students achieving 60 per cent grades A\* - C. However, the achievement of girls was significantly higher than that of boys in both years.
127. By Year 9, standards seen at the time of the inspection are average in relation to the Hillingdon LEA agreed syllabus. Students are well able to link their knowledge of religion with their everyday experiences. By Year 11, standards seen are average. Students extend their knowledge and understanding of how they can learn from religion and apply it in their lives. They make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of religious concepts. However, they do not always question or explore their own attitudes in sufficient depth because of the limited amount of specialist teaching currently available. Students' standards on entry are below average in religious education, so that standards seen represent good achievement across the school.
128. Teaching and learning are good. Students develop their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts through the teachers' effective use of discussion and questioning. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good because students are provided with good support and with work to match their specific needs. The use of key words and subject specific language enables students to improve their speaking and listening skills. Students make good progress as a result of the teachers' awareness of individual student needs. Teachers manage student behaviour well and this contributes to their learning. They have clear expectations of students and challenge them to extend their understanding. Assessment procedures provide a sound basis for assessing what students know and understand. However, there is no specific assessment on *learning from* religion. Not enough work is done to set detailed targets and so students are often unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve.

129. Students' spiritual and moral awareness is good. There are plenty of opportunities in the religious education curriculum to develop these aspects of students' personal development and these are exploited well. Students demonstrate a clear respect for the views, faiths and traditions of each other. A short course in ethics is offered to all students in Years 10 and 11. This fulfils the statutory requirements for religious education. Good opportunities are found in this course to develop spiritual and moral awareness.
130. The school's current arrangements for the leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The current head of subject is on long-term sick leave and this has left the department without leadership. There is a need to extend the departmental development plan to address current priorities that will have an impact on student achievement. The systematic monitoring of teachers and students' work is well established.
131. Since the last inspection, the school has had serious recruitment problems in the subject. However, standards have been maintained and the quality of current teaching is good. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

## **Design and technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good use of assessment has raised standards and achievement.
- Innovative workbooks successfully guide the technology process and keep students in touch with their progress.
- Very good new modules of work include national initiatives for literacy, numeracy and ICT, which improve students' communication as designers.
- The lack of formal standardisation across all the elements of design and technology results in missed opportunities to share good practice.

### **Commentary**

132. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 shows standards continuing to be above average in 2004. Well-structured workbooks and very effective assessment systems help students to see how to improve, resulting in very good attainment. In 2003 at the end of Year 11, accumulative GCSE results (food, graphics, resistant materials, systems and control and textiles) were well above the national average. This indicated very good achievement. Entry levels are well above national figures and highlight good standards in respect of equality of opportunity.
133. Boys' and girls' achievement was better in design and technology than in their other subjects. Students with special educational needs and those from different cultural backgrounds matched the success of their peers because work is well matched to the course demands and students' need. Support for gifted and talented students is stronger in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.
134. In the majority of lessons seen the teaching and learning was very good and on two occasions excellent. Teachers are caring and concerned to do their best for the students of all abilities. Very effective planning matches work to need and so improves learning. This planning enables lively and enthusiastic teaching, which challenges creativity.

Relationships are very good especially where paired and group work allows students to explore the properties of materials. This was clear in a Year 10 lesson on sensory analysis. Through tasting, discussing their opinions and completing an analysis, in groups, students were able to explore how manufacturers use market research to develop new products. In a minority of lessons, limited student participation and difficult accommodation made the quality of learning fall below the quality of teaching. Modules of work include very good use of numeracy, literacy and ICT, helping students to improve their communication as designers.

135. Students' attitudes to design and technology are very good because of the many club activities plus homework targeted to extend learning ready for the next lesson. Marking has an impact on attitudes because work is marked and returned rapidly; teacher's comments guide improvement. The behaviour policy is used well. For example, where student behaviour challenged the smooth running of a lesson, persistent use of the behaviour policy and high expectations soon restored calm.
136. Leadership is very good and inspires strong commitment from teachers. Management is good. It is structured to meet the demands of the school's technology status. The pyramid of management includes the technology bid co-ordinator, the ICT co-ordinator and two specific subject heads. This enables the department to deal with the split site nature of the subject and the subject's breadth, mentioned above, which includes the very successful child development course. This leads to the best options for students and contributes to the high standards in the subject. However, lack of formal whole team meetings misses the opportunity to share and embed good practice. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in some elements of the subject. This restricts the range of teaching and learning to develop independence. The department has made very good improvement on all the areas mentioned in the previous report but still lacks appropriate technology to help to raise standards further.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

**Art and design** and **music** were inspected in full and **drama** was sampled.

### **Drama**

137. GCSE results in 2003 were well below the national profile for the subject both overall and for the proportion obtaining higher grades (A\*-C). Results in 2004 were similar. Standards have been affected adversely by a lack of staffing continuity, although the school has now tackled this problem successfully. Speaking and listening is a weakness in several subject areas; however, in work seen in drama, students are now acquiring these skills rapidly because teachers match exercises well to students' existing competence. In Year 11, work seen in the inspection is already benefiting from this improved teaching, which features good subject knowledge of practical acting skills. Teaching ensures good learning by a mixture of prompting and focused individual instruction. It ensures that students work independently as far as possible, but that prompt intervention is given to those needing a precise structure. As a result, standards are rising, although they are still below average.

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching and learning result in positive student attitudes and good behaviour.
- Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average and achievement is good.
- Expectations of students by teachers are high.
- Standards in Year 11 are below the national average.
- Provision for gifted and talented students needs better planning.
- There is no ICT as part of the taught courses in Years 7, 8 and 9 and the use of ICT does not meet statutory requirements.

### **Commentary**

138. GCSE results in 2003 were slightly above the national average. GCSE results in 2004 fell below the national average, largely due to significant staffing difficulties, which have now been resolved. Standards seen and predicted grades for next year indicate a return to results above the national expectations, which has been the trend. Unusually, the girls' results in 2003 were significantly better than the boys', although this is not evident in the current Year 11 group.
139. Achievement is good. From the outset, teachers place a strong emphasis on the development of drawing and the use of colour. In Years 10 and 11 many students learn the value of research in their work and experiment widely using different media. Many also learn to draw competently, to use colour effectively and to manipulate three-dimensional materials successfully. They learn to work effectively as individuals. Standards in Year 9 are in line with national expectations. As students enter with standards below average, this represents good achievement as the result of teaching strategies. There is no significant difference in girls' and boys' achievement.
140. Students learn to draw, use colour and manipulate a range of other media with confidence as a result of good teaching. Homework, linked to coursework, is set and marked regularly. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make similar progress to other students. Gifted and talented students are insufficiently challenged. Provision for ICT does not meet statutory requirements in Years 7, 8 and 9. Teaching and learning is good in all years and on occasion very good. Teachers have high expectations of all students. Good planning, as well as the effective use of visual aids and demonstrations support learning and have a positive impact on achievement. The end of lesson review is not always used effectively to evaluate outcomes or to help students develop their oracy skills. The continuing unavailability of double lessons in Years 10 and 11 remains a barrier to progress. Relationships are very good.
141. Assessment is regular, thorough and particularly helpful in Years 10 and 11. Students are involved in evaluating their work and in determining their targets for improvement. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are not sufficiently informed of their National Curriculum levels. The department is well led by a highly experienced and dedicated specialist who has introduced a new GCSE vocational course this year. There is a good team spirit. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory; overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vision and determination of the head of department helps to provide students with a broad range of musical experiences.
- The excellent knowledge and expertise of the music staff are helping to raise standards.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students help to promote very good learning.
- The very good provision for the less musically able and the more musically able ensures all students make very good progress.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation requires lesson time to be spent collecting and returning instruments.
- The shortage of multicultural instruments results in the department being unable to cater for the needs of a significant proportion of the school's population.

### Commentary

142. The proportion of students attaining A\* to C grades in the 2003 GCSE examinations was above average when compared to national figures. The GCSE results for 2004 show a marked improvement on previous years. For many of the candidates the music result was their highest grade.
143. Standards seen at the end of Year 9 are above average. Prior to coming to the school the experience of many students in music is below average and, against that, their achievement is very good. Standards seen in Year 11 are above average and the students who have chosen the option achieve very well in relation to their modest prior attainment on entry to the course.
144. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 11. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subject and spare no effort to ensure that all students receive worthwhile musical experiences through enthusiastic and committed teaching. In a large majority of the lessons observed all students were totally engaged throughout the entire lesson because of the interesting nature of the activity and the effectiveness of the teaching. Lessons are thoroughly prepared and resourced to cater for students of all musical abilities. Consequently, all students with special needs make good progress. Provision in lessons for the more musically talented students is very good. Very good relationships with the students were observed in all classes. This encourages students to participate purposefully with the intention of improving their results.
145. Further opportunities for the more musically talented are offered in the form of a broad range of instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities. Ensembles feature in a large

majority of assemblies, offering those attending the opportunity to listen and reflect. Small groups or individual students give very good quality performances every day in assembly, providing an invaluable performing experience.

146. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Since the last inspection the issues raised have been addressed where possible and improvement is good. The head of department and her team have striven to ensure that students do not lack worthwhile musical experiences because of the need to teach lessons in non-specialist classrooms. They have also successfully delivered the ICT component of the National Curriculum despite the lack of fully dedicated computers and software. As stated in the last two reports, accommodation still remains poor; the present music room is too small for classes of 30 students and music lessons are also held in six other classrooms. Resources have to be carried from and returned to the music room within the lesson, reducing the time for music making. However, the long awaited computers are now installed and resources are good. There is still a shortage of multicultural instruments to enhance the department's delivery of the National Curriculum.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well to reach the expected standard for their age.
- Students' attainment at GCSE is above average.
- Schemes of work and assessment procedures are insufficiently developed.
- Students have positive attitudes and good relationships with their teachers.
- The facilities have a positive impact on learning.
- The changing rooms, office areas and rooms for teaching theory lessons are inadequate.

### **Commentary**

147. Students have different experiences before joining the school but their overall standards at the start of Year 7 are below average. By the end of Year 9, students attain average standards in most activities and their achievement is good. A few girls in Years 8 and 9 have below average standards in netball. The standard of the majority of students in core physical education in Years 10 and 11 is average and their achievement is satisfactory. Having only one lesson in Year 11 hinders their achievement. All students, in Years 7 to 11, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language, improve their games skills because teachers' demonstrations provide good visual images of performance techniques.

148. GCSE results have fluctuated over time but have mostly been above average. Results were well above average in 2003 but fell in 2004. The attainment of present GCSE students is above average and their achievement is good. A few lower attaining students do not fully understand the terminology used in anatomy and physiology.

149. Individual students and teams achieve high standards in district and regional competitions. Boys and girls benefit considerably from the opportunities provided by their teachers as part of the good extra-curricular programme. Sixth form students feel that too few activities are provided for them and would like a timetabled lesson.

150. The quality of teaching is good. All students make good progress and their learning is good. Students' good achievement in Years 7 to 11 is partly attributable to their positive attitudes and good relationships with their teachers. A minority of teaching is no better than satisfactory because teacher-talk is too dominant and students are not given enough independent learning activities. Students improve their practical skills but are not given sufficient opportunities to build their analytical skills. The schemes of work are insufficiently detailed in this respect. Lesson objectives are shared with the students at the start of each lesson and revisited at the end of the lesson. Teachers are inconsistent in their use of key words and in giving students opportunities to improve their literacy and communication skills. Assessment procedures overall are satisfactory.
151. The head of department provides satisfactory leadership and management for a team of teachers who work well together. Assessment procedures are developing but outcomes are not yet accurate. Insufficient time is spent monitoring performance data and using evaluation. Good improvements overall, however, have been made to the provision for physical education since the previous inspection. The time allocated to Year 9 and to GCSE has increased. The new 'goals', all weather pitches, the fitness zone and the sports hall are excellent facilities. However, the small changing areas, inaccessibility of the department office to male staff and the lack of a permanent room to teach the theory aspects of the subject, all hinder learning.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at GCSE are well above the national average.
- Teachers are positive and enthusiastic.
- Teachers' high expectations lead to students being highly motivated to succeed.
- Assessment is very good at informing students of their levels and of what they need to do to improve them.
- The scheme of work does not reflect sufficiently different learning styles or the full variety of teaching strategies.

### **Commentary**

152. Business studies is studied in Year 10 and 11 as a GCSE subject. The standards seen in lessons and in completed GCSE coursework are very good. Students start the subject with no formal prior knowledge of it. The standards achieved in GCSE are well above the national average with a high proportion of students being awarded A\* and A grades. The achievement of students is very good.
153. The quality of teaching is very good and this leads to very good learning. Teachers are well prepared for lessons. They match work to the attainment of students and conduct lessons at a good pace, using a variety of activities. In consequence, learning is very good because: students can access the work; have to work hard; and are interested in what they are doing. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, students studying the termination of employment were engrossed in determining how to dismiss their business studies

teacher. A Year 10 class experienced what it was like to have insufficient resources when they worked in groups to provide for their needs as castaways. Teachers' use of assessment is very good. Students understand the level at which they are working and know what they need to do to improve. This improves their learning.

154. The leadership of the new head of department is good. He has a clear vision for developing the department. The other teachers share it and work together as a team in its pursuit. His leadership has excellent support from his line manager. Management of the department is very good. Very good revision of the departmental handbook has been carried out. This contains the scheme of work for Years 10 and 11. It is very well structured and assessment procedures are integral to it. This is very effective in supporting teachers in their teaching and students in their learning. As yet, the scheme does not sufficiently reflect different learning styles or the full variety of teaching methods.
155. Staff are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subject. They are positive and give appropriate praise to students. In consequence, the behaviour of students is consistently good. They have a positive approach to their lessons and coursework. Students are prepared to contribute to oral work and they learn well from it because teachers are skilled in questioning, in reframing students' answers and in probing to enable students to clarify their understanding. The department is inclusive. It has high expectations that students of all abilities will succeed.
156. Improvement since the last inspection, when standards were below the national average, is very good. Standards are now well above average.

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

Personal, social and health education and work related learning were sampled and citizenship inspected in full.

### **Personal, social and health education**

157. All students follow a course of personal, social and health education (PSHE), which is allocated one lesson a fortnight. This is planned and coordinated by the teacher who is responsible for the course. The overall provision is good, although there is some variation in the expertise and confidence of the form tutors who teach the course. Good provision is made for education about sex and relationships and the abuse of drugs and alcohol, using external inputs. As form tutors teach the course, good relationships and continuity in the subject are established. Education for citizenship is provided along with the PSHE course.

### **Work related learning**

158. Provision for work related learning is good. The school provides good opportunities for work related learning in Years 10 and 11 and meets statutory requirements. The school has employed an external consultant to audit the provision and is keen to build on the findings. Opportunities are provided for ten students to attend vocational courses at the local college. At present there is only one vocational GCSE course offered in the school, which is in art and design, but there are GCSE courses in business studies, ICT and child

development which also have vocational links. All Year 10 students experience a very well organised two-week programme of work placements. Careers support and guidance are very well provided through the PSHE programme, citizenship and the Connexions careers service. Advisors are in school three days each week and interview all students giving them very well informed vocational advice.

## **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students value the use of outside speakers for the wider experience they bring into the classroom.
- The school forum gives students an opportunity to take part in a democratically elected body.
- The citizenship curriculum includes issues that stimulate student thinking.
- Subject departments need to raise awareness where citizenship aspects appear in their lessons.
- The assessment and recording system does not provide students with a clear enough picture of how well they are doing.

## **Commentary**

159. In the week of the inspection there were no designated lessons in citizenship timetabled, although elements were taught through other subjects. The following observations are made from the students' work supplied by the school and an interview with students.
160. Standards in the work that was scrutinized were average at the end of Year 9. The work showed that students had undertaken a variety of work, which had helped them to think, work and discuss important issues. In interviews students demonstrated that a broad level of knowledge of issues concerning law and order, human rights and work skills had been gained. Achievement at this stage has been satisfactory.
161. By the end of Year 11 the knowledge and understanding of students are about average. Achievement continues to be satisfactory. The sample of work and discussions with students indicate that they had used a variety of activities that had increased their knowledge of the range of citizenship topics and many had taken full advantage of that.
162. In some subject departments there were aspects in lessons that are part of the citizenship curriculum but were not specifically identified. However, in others elements of citizenship had been planned, but had not been picked up with sufficient emphasis in the teaching. Considerable inconsistency is found in the extent to which citizenship is promoted through subjects. In the interviews held with them, students indicated that computers had been used for research in some lessons. The assessment and recording procedures that are in place are satisfactory but are not giving students the information they feel they need to have about how well they are doing and how to improve sufficiently. Some students of all ages actively participate in citizenship through the school's forum and come to an understanding about taking part in a democracy.
163. The leadership and management of citizenship are satisfactory. While the planning

includes work with clear objectives and a good coverage of the citizenship curriculum, some subject departments do not yet identify the elements of citizenship within their curriculum or raise the students' awareness of these elements when they are taught. There are insufficient opportunities for many students to take part responsibly in both school and community based activities.

### Subjects and courses in the sixth form

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

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

#### Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grade A-E		% gaining grade A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	1	100	80.1	0	23.7	30.0	29.9
Biology	7	14	65.2	0	11.1	5.7	20.6
Business studies	5	100	76.4	0	16.3	26.0	26.2
Chemistry	8	38	72.7	0	13.9	8.8	24.1
Communication studies	7	100	86.4	28.6	23.8	40.0	32.0
Home economics	2	50	78.4	0	17.6	10.0	27.0
English literature	5	80	85.9	20.0	19.1	30.0	30.2
French	3	100	78.2	0	18.9	30.0	27.6
Design and technology	4	50	74.9	0	15.1	17.5	25.3
Geography	9	56	74.3	0	19.8	12.2	26.5
History	3	100	80.7	0	19.5	23.3	28.6
Information and communication technology	5	100	67.0	0	10.9	22.0	21.4
Mathematics	2	100	61.9	0	17.1	20.0	22.1
Other social studies	4	100	69.7	75.0	16.7	47.5	24.1
Physics	4	50	68.6	0	14.4	12.5	22.7
Sociology	3	100	71.8	33.3	18.4	36.7	25.4

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grade A-E		% gaining grade A-B		Average point score	
		School	National	School	National	School	National
Art and design	3	100	98.6	33.3	50.2	86.7	87.5
Biology	5	100	96.4	20.0	39.2	72.0	78.6

Business studies	13	100	98.7	69.2	36.8	96.9	80.1
Chemistry	3	100	97.6	33.3	49.0	73.3	84.9
English literature	14	92.9	99.5	21.4	46.5	70.0	86.5
Design and technology	7	100	97.8	28.6	35.0	65.7	77.9
Geography	8	100	98.7	62.5	44.5	95.0	84.0
History	14	100	99.0	14.3	44.6	72.9	84.6
Home economics	2	100	98.1	0	34.6	40.0	77.6
Information and communication technology	18	100	95.6	38.9	24.6	75.6	69.5
Mathematics	12	100	96.7	41.7	55.6	88.3	88.8
Music	3	100	98.8	0	38.9	60.0	81.1
Other social studies	13	100	97.4	30.8	42.7	80.0	81.8
Physics	5	100	96.7	40.0	44.6	88.0	81.7
Sociology	9	100	98.2	55.6	44.3	97.8	82.6
Business VCE	26	100	65.0	53.8	14.6	88.5	60.1
Travel and tourism	8	100	71.8	25.0	14.5	77.5	62.2

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subjects were English literature and German.

### ENGLISH LITERATURE

Provision in English literature is **satisfactory**.

### MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards are starting to improve after a recent dip.
- Teaching is good and supports many students who find formal essay writing difficult.
- Higher attaining students achieve well.
- Students have positive attitudes to their studies and are industrious.

### COMMENTARY

164. Results were well below the national average in A-level English literature in 2003. This reflects a dip from the last inspection when results were above average. Recent unconfirmed results for 2004 in A2 and AS level have been better and are average. There are fewer high attaining students opting for English literature in recent years but the ones who do, achieve well. The current standards are average in both Year 12 and Year 13 with a wide variety of attainment between the students. There is no significant difference between males and females. The achievement of most students is satisfactory.

165. Students' attitudes are good in class. They work hard and their oral skills have improved since the last inspection. They are prepared to volunteer answers and to enter into lively debate. Subtle questions from teachers enable students to draw comparisons between themes in different genres and between the poetic styles of different generations. They

are growing in confidence in the use of sophisticated language to describe, for example, Jane Austen's "ironic slant on society" and her use of "lavish locations". Higher attaining students particularly are developing a more rigorous approach to critical analysis guided by sensitive marking by the teachers.

166. The quality of teaching is good, resulting in good learning. Students' essay writing has improved over the course due to the clearly structured teaching and the preparation during lessons. The marking is also sharply focused on where there is a need for students to develop their answers. Marking shows the good subject knowledge of all staff. Many students are making good use of information and communication technology and the library facilities to undertake independent research. Their skills in annotation are good but a significant number find extended writing difficult to sustain and their work reveals a narrowness of background reading. Some are very reliant on teacher support.
167. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The close moderation of marking and course work enables the head of department to have a good overview of progress. Assessment procedures are now good but further use could be made of the data to track the achievement of students and plan the curriculum. The dip in results is being halted because of the various successful strategies introduced by the department.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum in the sixth form**

168. Standards are above average in literacy in the sixth form. Students have not been sufficiently independent in their learning and often reluctant to engage in discussion, but the emphasis on developing oral skills in some subjects is having a positive effect on standards. In mathematics, an excellent debate prompted by carefully framed questions by the teacher resulted in students arriving at a clear understanding of the lesson. Similar examples were seen in business studies. Students are reinforcing their skills in reference and annotation in English and art, and in the BTEC early years course they are taught to think for themselves because the teaching is so well structured.

### **German**

Provision in German is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students show good attitudes to learning.
- Teaching commands the respect and confidence of the students.
- Examination results suggest past underachievement.

### **Commentary**

169. It is not possible to compare the attainment of the GCE advanced level results in German with national averages, as uptake in the past for modern languages has been sporadic and groups have been too small for meaningful statistical comparison. No students took A- or AS level GCE examinations in German in 2003. Results at AS level for 2004 reflected low grades and none of the students are continuing with A2 advanced level.
170. Standards observed during the inspection for Year 12 are below average, reflecting the grades they attained at GCSE. Given that only the first three lessons of the current AS level course were observed, it is also not possible to judge reliably the achievement of students over time.

However, the small group of girls are conscientious and keen to do well and showed satisfactory achievement in the lessons observed. They show good attitudes to learning. They write and speak familiar phrases in a range of tenses, but do not have a secure enough grasp of grammar to use the language independently; they are unable to respond in conversation using familiar vocabulary and phrases for more than a limited period. Their pronunciation is generally good, although not yet entirely free of English intonation.

171. Teaching and learning in the lessons seen are good. Appropriately, teachers have recognised the need to develop the accurate use and application of grammar and they place a strong emphasis on this aspect of language. Teachers have a good command of the German language, enjoying the confidence and respect of the students.
172. Teachers build on a secure knowledge of the students' abilities and are very supportive of individual learning needs, encouraging them to seek clarification where necessary. Students are encouraged to look up vocabulary in dictionaries, but guidance on how to use dictionaries lacks thoroughness. These grammar lessons lack sufficient oral consolidation of written exercises to balance students' linguistic development. Consolidating other learning from GCSE, such as clausal structures and cases, is insufficiently focused to complement the learning of verb forms. Some exercises use out-dated texts, which do not use the recent official reforms of German spelling. Assessment is satisfactory; there is good oral feedback in class and marking is regular although not rigorous enough in alerting students of errors in writing and grammar. Records for the recent AS group were unavailable.
173. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Using a team including two inexperienced teachers last year may have been a risk, but there is now a more experienced team, able to analyse and act on suggestions for improvement for the current cohort. This year a German language assistant will supplement provision. There are good support mechanisms in place for guiding students in their choice of language. All four students in the current Year 12 see their choice as a suitable complement to their vocational course in leisure and tourism. As German was not offered at the time of the previous inspection report, it is not possible to judge improvement in provision since then.

## **MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES**

The focus subjects were mathematics and biology. Work in further mathematics was sampled and showed average standards and good achievement from GCSE entry.

### **Mathematics**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Support for students in their learning is very good, so students achieve well.
- Further mathematics is a notable feature of the Year 12 curriculum, meeting the needs of gifted and talented students well.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good, responsible for the very good improvement since the last inspection.

## **COMMENTARY**

174. Performance in the 2003 GCE A-level was above average for the 12 students completing the course. Standards improved in 2004, with 18 students completing the course. Twenty-five students completed the AS level course in Year 12 in 2004, earning a wide

range of grades. Students studied the first modules in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics in Year 12 in 2004 but this has changed this year to two modules in core mathematics and one module in statistics. Further mathematics has been introduced in Year 12 with nine students on the course, made possible by the increased success of Year 11 students last year at GCSE grade A\*. Year 13 students are studying further modules in pure mathematics and statistics. Standards have improved since the last inspection.

175. Standards seen in the inspection in Year 13 are average. This represents good achievement by students given their below average levels of attainment on entry to the course at the start of Year 12. Students did not find their work easy in Year 12, problem solving in the mechanics examination being particularly difficult for them. Statistics was their most successful module. Year 12 students have made a good start to their course. Standards are above average. Standards in further mathematics are average for the course, meeting the needs of these mathematically gifted and talented students well.
176. Overall teaching is very good. Teaching is at no time less than good and is sometimes very good or excellent. The excellent teaching is characterised by the excellent use of questions that demand the thinking skills of students and an ability to express ideas orally, from which they learn. Learning is not always as good as the teaching because these thinking skills are not always highly developed. Extra support for students from teachers is very good, with extra lessons outside school hours and the availability of individual support throughout the school day. This is why students achieve well. Subject expertise and the planning of lessons are strengths in the teaching because they enable an accurate exchange of information and good progress through the scheme of work.
177. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The monitoring of the department's work is very good, especially the monitoring of teaching and the very good use of assessment data. Student numbers are rising following the increased standards in Year 11. The curriculum has improved through the introduction of further mathematics and standards are continuing to rise. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

## **MATHEMATICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM IN THE SIXTH FORM**

178. Standards in basic skills in the sixth form are very good, particularly in design and technology in calculations, data handling and the use of computers. In the BTEC early years course statistical analysis is a strong feature. Mathematics is no barrier to learning in other subjects.

## **Biology**

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Effective questioning clearly stems from teachers' expertise in biology. This is helping to raise standards.
- There are insufficient planned opportunities for students rigorously to apply themselves.
- Students' generous teamwork in tackling complex work enriches their learning but fieldwork experiences and interesting visits are limited.

## **COMMENTARY**

179. Advanced level results in 2003 were average. All five students passed the examination but just one achieved grade B. Results in 2004 were broadly similar. Students did not do as well as expected in their AS examination in 2003 but the provisional results of those who chose to go on and study A-level, show an upward swing towards the average. GCE AS results in 2004 are much improved; over half the group of 11 students gained the highest grades, A and B.
180. Standards of work seen for current Year 13 students are well above average. Assessments, so far, show that, in terms of predictions based upon their work and AS results, all are likely to pass the examination with many attaining the higher grades. Overall, at this outset into Year 13, students are already achieving well. This is due, in no small measure, to their very good attitudes to learning. Their work shows appropriate progression into advanced ideas; they dealt well with photosynthesis at a molecular level as their teacher competently channelled their thinking. More practice is needed in applying information themselves when reasoning out links between complex processes.
181. Students in Year 12 were just beginning their course at the time of the inspection, but are achieving well and much as expected. They are swiftly moving on from their GCSE work into new areas of biochemistry and microscopy. Everyone successfully learnt to calibrate their own microscope and measure cells because, if needed, expert help from their teacher and more able classmates was readily available to help with the calculations. They battled well in understanding why animal cells burst when frozen without models to help them visualise the problem.
182. Teaching is good overall and students learn well in lessons as a result. A striking feature is the teachers' strong subject expertise. It was used well in widening knowledge about plant physiology through competent explanations. Students get on well with each other and their teachers, which helps them hurdle over difficult work and make good progress. Teachers convey the next steps students need to take to advance their learning. However, lesson planning is not creative enough to enable students to be as imaginatively involved throughout lessons as they might be. Accommodation for science including sixth form courses is unsatisfactory. Laboratories are uninspiring and not located well enough together.
183. Leadership and management are satisfactory. New to the position, the head of department is keen to lead and develop the management role. A clear commitment to raising standards exists and current Year 13 students have achieved notable results. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards and achievement are showing an upward trend but numbers opting to study the subject are too small in Year 12. Fieldwork and visits to interesting events are limited.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

184. One lesson in advanced level ICT was sampled. Year 13 students were beginning to learn about organisational structures. Their learning was good because the teacher had a good knowledge of the topic and related it well to students' experiences. Students displayed good attitudes towards their work, frequently asking questions to further their understanding. They showed that they were able to study independently, planning an

essay to compare business structures in different countries. Standards in the lesson observed were above national expectations.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum in the sixth form**

185. Students use computers regularly in all subjects inspected. They are very competent, readily rising to the demands placed upon their skills so that their learning is efficiently increased by using ICT.

### **HUMANITIES**

The focus subject was history. Psychology was sampled.

### **PSYCHOLOGY**

186. Two lessons were seen. Standards were average in the 2003 A-level results, but the latest results rose sharply, both overall and for the proportion gaining the higher grades (AB). Standards of work seen in the inspection well exceed those found nationally. Teaching is very good because teachers deploy an expert command of specialist knowledge to help students relate their own experiences and interests to psychological concepts. Achievement is well ahead of expectations as students build on previous knowledge and work with enthusiasm and commitment in class.

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Planning and especially the identification of work to challenge students is very good.
- Marking is insufficiently detailed to enable students to remedy some weaknesses.
- Students are positive about the subject and undertake individual research well.

### **Commentary**

187. In 2003 all candidates passed the GCE advanced level examinations, as they did in the previous and succeeding years. However, in terms of the points scored, results were below the national average and the proportion of candidates achieving the higher A and B grades was very low. There was little change in either of these indicators in the most recent year. There was no significant difference between the performance of males and females.

188. Standards of work seen are below expectations, although as students' attainment on entry to the course is also below average, achievement is satisfactory. Students usually write coherently and fluently, in mostly accurate English. They use subject specific terminology well in explaining historical and political ideas and have some understanding of the theories underlying them. There are some weaknesses in essay style; written English is not always as succinct and accurate as it might be and students do not always read as widely as they should. They are able to venture speculative answers in response to direct questions and in discussion, but do not automatically take notes when the teacher is speaking, or others are responding to questions. They find it difficult to

analyse, comment on, or assess each other's work. Lack of these skills, which they need to be able to master if they are to accept responsibility for their individual learning, is inhibiting their achievement.

189. Sixth form students approach the subject positively and enjoy their lessons. Teaching and learning are good. Students benefit from a range of different approaches and teaching strategies as the entire department is involved in sixth form teaching. Teachers plan very carefully and provide very well for the range of abilities. In a challenging lesson on European dictatorships students were faced with questions such as "where did the terms left and right originate?" and invited to write five-minute definitions of fascism and communism. Work is regularly marked and helpful diagnostic comment is included although there is scope for more detailed correction of spelling and stylistic errors.

190. The subject is well managed and led. Students are opting for history in increasing numbers compared to the time of the last inspection, perhaps attracted by recent changes in the syllabus. The subject website offers helpful guidance on examination requirements and links to other useful sites. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

The focus subject was design and technology.

### **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

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

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

- A good team teaching approach to learning capitalises on the expertise of the department.
- The lack of wider reading, to give background knowledge on designers and the history of design, limits creativity.
- A good flexible approach to course design meets students' changing needs.
- Students' limited independent study skills restrict their opportunity to explore the challenge of creative analytical thinking without barriers.
- Assessment is very good and ensures that students know clearly what and how to improve.
- Accommodation for design and technology is unsatisfactory.

### **COMMENTARY**

191. The school's technology bid aims to increase the number of students entering advanced level design and technology. Students enter the sixth form course with a range of backgrounds. It is an open sixth form subject so all abilities are welcome. Over the most recent years the interest in subjects has varied – in the past students have studied home economics, product design and graphics. This year graphic design is the focus. Group sizes are small, making comparisons with the national average difficult.

192. In 2003, at GCE advanced level, all students gained an A/E pass, which was above the national average but the proportion gaining grades A/B was below the national average.

In 2003 home economics results were also below the national average. Scrutiny of work and grades over time show good design, modelling and making, which illustrates good achievement. When comparing students' prior performance with their examination outcomes, results show these students achieved well. Results have improved in 2004. In the lessons seen and from analysis of students' work standards are above expectation and current students are continuing to achieve well. Girls have performed better than boys in the examination and this difference is seen also in school.

193. Teaching and learning are good. Good reflection on GCSE skills builds up students' confidence; some of them may have taken more than one design and technology subject in Year 11. Recall of research skills and strategies for collecting primary and secondary evidence in order to identify and solve design problems are good. Teachers' enthusiasm cultivates a good atmosphere for students to develop ideas, identify needs and plan specifications for their minor and major projects. Resources are good but accommodation is unsatisfactory. Workshops are often cramped, old fashioned and poorly designed. The use of computer aided designing and making is at an early stage of development that limits the level at which students can operate in graphic design. Restricted, but nevertheless good, whole group discussion, prompts early stage creative thinking but students have limited independent study skills and lack wide reading in the subject and therefore are not always confident in their decision making. Some teachers are building independent study skills into lessons. For example, the 'time line' used to identify an image, of the progress of designing from the beginning of civilisation until more recent times helped students visualise development in designing. Students have a good concept of time management and deadlines. Assessment is very good, as procedures enable students to know exactly where to improve and teachers maintain very good records that influence their planning.
194. Leadership is very good. Enthusiastic responses to students' comments are followed up, which makes the teaching a very good match to their individual needs. All teachers involved in sixth form teaching work effectively as a team. Persistent efforts to raise the profile of design and technology keep the technology bid aims in focus. The recruitment of teachers has been difficult but appears to be improving, as is the retention of students completing AS or A2. Management of the courses is good but the department lacks an exhibition area and the appropriate studio accommodation to encourage more students to appreciate the sophistication of the course.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus subject was business studies including courses leading to intermediate General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ), Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE), Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced level qualifications.

### **BUSINESS STUDIES**

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

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Standards achieved are well above the national average.
- The management of the courses is very good.
- Assessment is very good and students are involved actively in monitoring their progress.
- Students make very good progress because their attitudes are very good and the teaching is very good.
- Some case study material is dated.

### **Commentary**

195. Over the last three years standards achieved in both A-level and in AVCE were well above the national average, with a high proportion of students achieving A grades. On entry to the advanced level course, students' overall attainment is in line with the national average. Those entering AVCE business are somewhat below that average. Students on both courses make very good progress in the sixth form.
196. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are skilled in questioning. Students are willing to contribute orally and to work collaboratively with fellow students and their teachers. This leads to very good learning. Teachers plan well. They deliver their lessons with pace. Students respond by working hard and relationships are excellent being based on maturity and respect. At times the pace means that the students do not reflect sufficiently or relate the topic to their existing knowledge. Teachers have high expectations and have created a climate of high achievement, which is shared by the students. The students work with commitment and are determined to succeed. Assessment procedures are very good and assessment outcomes are shared with the students, who are able, in consequence, to monitor their progress.
197. The leadership of the new head of department is good. He communicates a clear vision and leads a teaching team committed to the high achievement of all students. The management of the department is very good. Courses are very well structured, with assessment criteria being integral to coursework assignments. This ensures that students know what they need to do in order to succeed. The subject planning makes a good contribution to the personal and social development of the students. The teachers are deployed effectively. For example, all four teachers teach AVCE to ensure that students benefit from the individual expertise of each teacher.
198. The previous report found sixth form standards to be above average. Good improvement since that report is shown by those standards being assessed now as being well above average.

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

The focus subjects were art and music. Media studies was also sampled.

## **MEDIA STUDIES**

199. One lesson in media studies was seen. Standards were well above average in the 2003 advanced level results. Results in 2004 are similar in the range of grades and in the work seen of current students, standards are well above those found nationally. Teaching is very good, deploying high standards of specialist knowledge to ensure that students understand and appreciate film history. Achievement is well above average because teaching builds well on the existing interests and enthusiasms of students to give them a secure understanding of the social and historical contexts influencing cinema.

## **ART**

Provision in art is **good**.

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Consistently good teaching ensures good learning.
- Independent learning skills are well developed.
- Tasks are challenging and interesting so that attitudes are positive and enthusiastic.
- The attainment at the higher grades is below the national average.

## **COMMENTARY**

200. Advanced level results in 2003 overall were above average. The percentage of students achieving the higher grades fell below the national average. This was a similar trend in 2004. The department is very inclusive and accepts some students who have not undertaken art at GCSE. For students such as these, the results represent good personal achievement due to good course organisation and teaching. Independent learning skills are well established. Students are very capable in exploring a wide range of solutions to problems and in experimenting in a wide variety of two- and three-dimensional materials. Some manipulate their chosen materials with imagination, inventiveness and confidence. Students use ICT with confidence and creativity. In some cases, personal styles emerge and also strengths in particular media. However, very thorough preparatory work does not often translate into finished work of a high standard. Frequently, students who are very talented in art at GCSE are choosing not to follow the advanced course. This adversely affects the dynamism of the group and standards in Year 13.

201. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations. Tasks are challenging and match the needs of students. Resources are used effectively. Very good support is given to individual students. Assessment is very thorough and regular feedback to students effectively identifies targets for improvement. There is a small number who lack drive and enthusiasm and additional strategies are needed to improve their progress and productivity.

202. Leadership of the subject is good. There is a very strong team approach. All are encouraged to share their ideas and specialist skills. The leadership shows innovation. A new vocational course has just been added to the existing good provision. Management is satisfactory. The monitoring of teaching and learning is good. In the curriculum the balance of conceptual and traditional fine art skills in schemes of work is

inappropriate. Strategic management needs to focus on ways of providing for more able and talented students and on attracting them to the course.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good care and support given by the teacher raises standards and enables the students to develop as mature young musicians.
- The very high standard of extra-curricular activities gives students many opportunities for extending their performing skills.
- The excellent relationships between teacher and students help to promote very good learning.
- Accommodation for music is poor.
- The allocation of sixth form students to lower school groups further increases performing experiences and gives them opportunities to act as role models.

### **Commentary**

203. There were no GCE advanced subsidiary (AS) or advanced level (A2) candidates in 2003 or 2004 because of insufficient numbers of students wishing to take the course. Eight students are taking the AS course in Year 12 and indications suggest that a larger number of students will be applying to take advanced level next year. There has not been the facility for students to consider the technology options at this level owing to the lack of computers and software.

204. In Year 12, students have made a good start to the AS level course. In the lessons observed they were successfully starting to bridge the gap between GCSE and AS level by learning how to write down melodic dictation, cover some of the basic theory and begin to study the first set work by learning to play it in an ensemble.

205. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. The teacher is always ready to challenge students with probing questions and to extend learning from her own excellent knowledge of the subject. The teacher is an excellent role model, both in her manner and performance, always making sure that every example is played musically. She will very often enable the students to discover their own learning through skilful questioning and encouragement. The teacher makes every effort to ensure that students are able to perform to their highest possible level. All sixth form music students are encouraged to lead appropriate groups in the main school, thus giving them invaluable experience of directing ensembles and enabling them to contribute to the development of younger musicians. Accommodation for music is poor. Rooms are insufficient in number, uninviting and not suited to music.

206. The very good leadership and management are also contributory factors in promoting high standards. The head of department is highly efficient and has built a team of like-minded classroom and instrumental teachers, dedicated to enabling students to achieve very high standards. The current academic provision in the sixth form is becoming well established and the recently acquired computers will enable the department to increase

the range of courses available. A very broad range of extra-curricular activities helps to develop the students' already advanced instrumental skills. Sixth form students regularly appear as soloists in the school concert.

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

There were no focus subjects in this area. The travel and tourism course was sampled. Standards in the AVCE examination were above the national average in 2003. Students join the course with no previous experience of the subject so their achievement is very good. In the lesson observed at the very start of the Year 12 course, students' learning was good because of the good teaching on the history of travel and tourism.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

The school offers a BTEC vocational course in early years nursery nursing involving work related learning and placements in local child care establishments.

### **Early years nursery nursing**

Provision in the early years nursery nursing course is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' attainment is above average.
- Students achieve very well in relation to their earlier learning.
- Teaching is very good and supports the development of independent learning.
- Excellent leadership leads to a very well planned course.
- Students' attitudes are very positive and they have very good relationships with their teachers.
- There are too many teachers involved in the delivery of the course.

## **COMMENTARY**

207. In 2004, all six students attained a B or C grade in their three A-levels (triple award course). In previous years results have been above average. Students' achievement is very good because most students enter the course with a low points score in their GCSE examinations. The course gives the opportunity for students to progress to higher vocational qualifications or to a degree course. The course is a good progression from the GCSE in child development offered in Years 10 and 11. Previous students have followed careers linked to childcare with paediatric nursing, teaching and early years provision management being popular choices.

208. The standards seen of the majority of current students are above average and students of all abilities achieve very well. Students in Year 13 manage their learning independently and in a structured manner. They are confident in the way they match their evidence to the unit specifications. Students' learning is almost entirely based on primary evidence. They gain this experience from 800 hours, spread over the two-year course, which they spend working in early years care settings, nursery and primary schools.

209. Teaching and learning are very good with some excellent features. In the best lessons students are encouraged to carry out independent research and to try activities for

themselves. However, in one lesson observed learning was very teacher led and students had too few opportunities for independent learning. The course requires an early years specialist and a nurse to be part of the teaching team and the expertise of these practitioners makes a very good contribution to students' learning. There are nine teachers involved in teaching parts of the course. Students reported that they would have preferred fewer teachers and found the large number confusing at times. Students have very positive attitudes and very good relationships with their teachers. The task sheets provide clear guidelines to help students understand the requirements of each unit. Assessment is very good because teachers thoroughly evaluate students' work, giving detailed areas for improvement on the record sheets.

210. The head of department is an excellent and inspirational leader who manages a large department very well. Record keeping is very secure as is the long-term planning of the many aspects of the course. The very good achievement of students is directly attributable to the teachers' knowledge of them and recognition of their strengths and personal situations. There is a real commitment to meeting the needs of all students.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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