

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **REDNOCK SCHOOL**

Dursley

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115958

Headteacher: Mr D Alexander

Lead inspector: Paul Sadler

Dates of inspection: 29 November – 3 December 2004

Inspection number: 268892

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

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Foundation  
Age range of pupils: 11-18  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 1357

School address: Rednock Drive  
Dursley  
Gloucestershire

Postcode: GL11 4BY

Telephone number: 01453 543618  
Fax number: 01453 545639

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D Martin

Date of previous inspection: 15 March 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Rednock School is a comprehensive school serving the small towns of Dursley and Cam, situated in the southern part of the Cotswold Hills between Gloucester and Bristol, close to the M5. It has 1357 pupils and students aged 11-18. It is of above average size, although the size of the sixth form, 235 students, is about average. There are more girls than boys, mainly because in Year 13 girls outnumber boys by more than two to one. Some 8.5 per cent of pupils have special educational needs (SEN), which is below average; 2.7 per cent have statements of SEN, which is average. The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is below average at 2 per cent, as is the proportion for whom English is an additional language, 0.4 per cent. These pupils speak Portuguese as their first language. Numbers of pupils from traveller families, refugees and asylum seekers are very low. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals, 5.3 per cent, is low compared with the national average of 16 per cent. Other indicators suggest the area is economically advantaged although there are pockets of deprivation, recognised by the government through the area's designation as an area of rural and coastal deprivation. Data from primary schools indicate that the attainment of pupils on entry to Year 7 is average; standards at entry to the sixth form are below average. The number of pupils entering or leaving the school other than at the usual time is low at 10 per cent, compared with the

national average of 23 per cent. The school acquired specialist science status in 2003 and the 'Investors in People' award in 2004. It also has the Artsmark and Sportsmark awards.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Responsibilities
1611	P Sadler	Lead inspector	
19639	G Anderson	Lay inspector	
13122	S Matthews	Team inspector	English, Business
23528	A Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics
12356	R Dickason	Team Inspector	Science
10385	K Hopkins	Team Inspector	Design & technology
22491	L Small	Team Inspector	Information & communication technology
22953	P Dacombe	Team Inspector	Modern foreign languages
33162	J Ward	Team Inspector	History
30743	N Cowell	Team Inspector	Geography, special educational needs, English as an additional language
10053	J Simms	Team Inspector	Art and design, Health and social care
31673	J Gwyer-Roberts	Team Inspector	Music, Citizenship, Drama
25748	R Moyle	Team Inspector	Physical education
18673	R Wilkins	Team Inspector	Religious education, Work-related learning
2521	S Killman	Team Inspector	Psychology

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA  
 Herringston Barn  
 Herringston  
 Dorchester  
 Dorset  
 DT2 9PU

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

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>13</b>
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>18</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>WORK-RELATED LEARNING</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>65</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This school shows good effectiveness** and gives very good value for money. Teaching is very good overall. Pupils behave very well and have very good attitudes; they want to succeed.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils learn very well and reach better standards than expected because of very good teaching.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good because the school has high expectations of them and fosters a desire to learn.
- Pupils take full advantage of the many opportunities provided to extend their learning beyond lessons.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory. In some areas the school is poorly cleaned.
- The school listens carefully to the views of pupils and acts on them.
- The school has very good links with the community and with other schools and colleges, but whilst communication with parents is sound, it needs further development.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The small amount of weak teaching has been eradicated and the management of English has improved. Major projects have been very successful, for instance in achieving specialist science college status. There have been some good improvements to the accommodation, although this remains unsatisfactory overall. The restricted accommodation still precludes a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	A	B	E
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A	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 pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

**The achievement of boys and girls is good overall.** It is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Achievement observed in pupils' work, especially in Year 11, is better than that suggested by data from the 2003 examinations, where results were well below those for similar schools, although this was not the case in previous years. Observed work suggests that, broadly, standards are above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11. Results in national tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 are well above average. Results in examinations at the end of Year 11 are above average. In the sixth form results are average but achievement is

good as students with modest GCSE attainment are accepted onto A-level courses, where they generally succeed. In some subjects such as art and physical education (PE) achievement is limited by the quality of the accommodation and resources. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number with English as an additional language achieve well, in line with other pupils.

**The development of pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, is good.** Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Those who might experience difficulties in this area are very well supported. Attendance is good as is punctuality to lessons, except when long walks across the site prevent this.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is very good;** none is unsatisfactory and some is excellent. The best teaching is in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, where it is very good overall. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good. Pupils respond very well to this very good teaching; learning is very good. They concentrate well and are proud of what they achieve.

The school offers a wide range of subjects and courses. Some pupils study too many subjects for GCSE, placing undue pressure on them to complete work. However guidance overall is good because it encourages pupils to achieve their potential, for instance by introducing them to higher education through the specialist science work. Enrichment is very good and promotes social development well. Governors and managers have worked hard to secure resources to improve the accommodation. There have been some good recent improvements, for instance in drama and science and currently under construction for music, but the worst remains very poor and unsatisfactory standards of cleaning mean that accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. The school has very good partnerships with business, the local community and with other schools, especially primary schools.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** The headteacher has been in post since September 2004. He has a clear vision for the school at the heart of the community of Dursley and Cam. His leadership is already good and has considerable potential. The governing body is good. It supports the teaching staff and pupils and challenges them to achieve high standards. Statutory requirements are met apart from that for a daily act of collective worship. The leadership of other key staff is good. Management is good overall.

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

Parents are, rightly, very pleased with the standards their children achieve, the quality of the teaching and the individual care they receive. They believe, also correctly, that routine communication could be improved. Pupils enjoy coming to school. One described it as 'vibrant', an excellent term to describe the wide range of exciting opportunities offered. Parents and pupils agree that the accommodation is unsatisfactory.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**



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

- Continue to improve the quality of accommodation, including cleaning.
- Improve routine communication with parents.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Continue to strive to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT REDNOCK SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The effectiveness of the sixth form is good**, and it provides good cost-effectiveness. Students are very well taught and as a result they reach average standards and achieve well in relation to their below average entry standards. The school promotes very high expectations, for instance through its many links with higher education. The school endeavours to meet the wishes of all students and as a result some classes are small. In these cases a lack of interaction between students limits achievement in spite of very good teaching.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is very good. As a result students achieve higher grades than might be predicted from their sometimes modest GCSE results.
- There is a rich variety of opportunities from which all students benefit, including opportunities to take part in running the school.
- Relationships between students and with their teachers are excellent.
- The organisation of the curriculum is sometimes inefficient.
- The main sixth form accommodation is poor, however plans to replace it are at an advanced stage.

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

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Very good in English.</b> Teachers have excellent subject knowledge that promotes a very good quality of learning. <b>Very good in French.</b> Very good teaching coupled with thorough coverage of the syllabus leads to very good exam results.
Mathematics	<b>Very good.</b> Assessment is used well to promote high standards.
Science	<b>Satisfactory in biology.</b> Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject but lower attaining students do not have enough guidance to help them to organise their work and some underachieve. Work observed in <b>chemistry, physics</b> and <b>geology</b> was of a <b>high standard</b> .
Information and communication technology	<b>Good.</b> Very good relationships provide very good conditions for learning. Currently only male students study the subject.
Humanities	<b>Good in psychology.</b> The well-qualified staff have very good specialist subject knowledge ensuring students respond accurately and confidently to the work set.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Very good in design and technology.</b> Very good teaching reflects careful planning and very high expectations of students.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Very good in drama.</b> Very good teaching results in students achieving better than expected results. <b>Satisfactory in art and design.</b> Teaching is good but learning is adversely affected by poor accommodation and lack of resources.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and	<b>Very good in physical education.</b> Very good teaching provides very well

travel

for individual students' needs.

Business	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is good. ICT is used well, although there is limited access to computers.
Health and social care	<b>Very good.</b> Teaching and learning are very good, providing students with a good range of opportunities in lessons and from external experiences such as work placements.

---

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

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Advice, guidance and support based on monitoring students' work are good. They are more effective in some subjects, such as mathematics, than in others, such as biology. Students receive very good guidance on applying for higher education and careers. They are encouraged to raise their personal aspirations, for instance through the many links with higher education and local employers.

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

**Leadership and governance are good** as the sixth form meets the needs of students and provides very good teaching leading to good achievement. **Management is also good.** Day-to-day routines are effective but small classes lead to inefficiency and there is limited collaboration with other schools and colleges.

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

Students are rightly very pleased with the education they are receiving. They have very good relationships with staff and are delighted with the range of opportunities open to them. They look forward to future improvements in the accommodation.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards of work are above average in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form; they are well above average in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is good overall, and very good in Years 10 and 11.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 11 are well above average in English, science, information & communication technology (ICT), religious education (RE), history and design and technology.
- In the sixth form students attain well above average standards in French; standards in most other subjects are above average.
- By Year 9 pupils' achievement is very good in English, mathematics, science, and music.
- By Year 11 pupils' achievement is very good in English, science, ICT, RE, history, art and design and technology.
- In the sixth form students' achievement is very good in English and health and social care.
- The achievement of pupils with SEN and English as an additional language is in line with that of all pupils; gifted and talented pupils achieve very well across the school.
- In some subjects such as art and PE, pupils' and students' achievement is limited by the quality of accommodation and resources.

#### Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	37.8 (39.5)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	37.4 (36.7)	35.4 (34.7)
science	36.8 (36.2)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 235 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	62(69)	52(50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	38.5 (40.1)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 211 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

1. Pupils enter the school with broadly average standards in Year 7. In national tests and examinations in 2003, Year 9 pupils attained well above average standards in English, mathematics and science when compared with all schools nationally. When these results are compared with the same pupils' results at the end of Year 6, their achievements in English and science, and for all subjects combined, were very high, in the top five per cent of schools nationally. In Year 11 pupils' GCSE results were above average, but when compared with their own results in Year 9, they were well below average. In 2003 62 per cent of pupils attained five or more good GCSE passes (grades A\*-C). This was a drop from 69 per cent in 2002. Over a five-year period results in Year 9 have been improving faster than schools nationally; in Year 11 the trend is in line with schools nationally. Results in 2004 were broadly similar to those of 2003. In the sixth form, standards at entry are lower than average, but examination results are broadly in line with those found nationally.
2. Work seen during the inspection showed that in Year 9 standards are above average. The highest standards are found in English, mathematics and science. Here standards are well above average. In other subjects standards are above average, except in ICT and citizenship, where they are average. Pupils of this age show good achievement. They achieve very well in English, mathematics, science, modern languages and music. In other subjects their achievement is good. In Year 11 the standard of work seen was well above average, most notably so in English, science, modern languages, ICT, RE, history and design & technology. It was above average in other subjects except geography and citizenship, where it was average. Pupils' achievement at this age is very good overall, and especially in English, science, modern languages ICT, RE, and design & technology; it is good in all other subjects except geography, where it is satisfactory. Achievement does not always match the very good overall standard of the teaching, due to the exceptional demands made on students studying a large number of subjects to examination, and by limitations placed by the accommodation and resources, for instance in art and design and PE.
3. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is in line with that of all other pupils. Gifted and talented pupils achieve very well throughout the school, very often because of the wide range of experiences offered, for instance in music, sport and science where the school has formed links with the Open University as part of its specialist status.

## Sixth form

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.2 (94.3)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	35.4 (37.8)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	255.4 (238.1)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 108 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

4. In the sixth form standards as shown by A-level and vocational results are in line with national averages and this was borne out by work seen during the inspection. However, students tend to do better than would be expected from their earlier GCSE

results. Standards are well above average in French and below average in biology; in other subjects they are average or above. Achievement in the sixth form is good. The school allows pupils with modest GCSE grades to study A-level and equivalent courses, and most achieve success. Achievement in English, French and health and social care is very good and in most other subjects it is good. It is satisfactory in art and in biology. Starting from a low base, some students struggle initially but most soon catch up because of the very good teaching.

5. Overall standards of literacy are good in the sixth form, reflecting the trend for results in GCSE English language to be above the national average. Students can retake GCSE to improve their grades but relatively few choose to do so. Communications skills are developed well in many subjects, particularly drama and business studies. In all subjects literacy skills were judged to be at least good and often very good. The library has improved recently and has a good study area for students and a good range of higher level text and reference books.

## Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance and punctuality are good overall. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their social development is very good and their spiritual, moral and cultural development are good, making these aspects of personal development good overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good attitudes to school, which has a very positive impact on their learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good, thereby reducing the negative impact of the poor accommodation.
- Pupils mature particularly well in their social development and the school provides very well for this.

### Commentary

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.8	School data	0.1
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

6. Pupils are keen to come to school because they think it is a good school to be at. As a result they have good attendance records and arrive punctually at the start of the school day. Punctuality for some lessons is adversely affected by the accommodation, for example in music. The school's measures to promote attendance are good because they are carefully thought through and consistent.

#### *Ethnic background of pupils*

#### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1307	77	1
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	22	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0



No ethnic group recorded	3	0	0
--------------------------	---	---	---

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

7. Pupils' attitudes are very good because of the high quality of their social development and because the school stimulates in pupils an excellent desire to learn. This makes a very good contribution to achievement. Pupils are engrossed in their learning, particularly when teaching is very good, leading to high levels of achievement. Pupils are focussed, building on skills and persevering when difficulties arise. Pupils are self-critical and suggest sensible ways in which their work can be improved. They are confident to try out their ideas without fear of ridicule and others value their contributions. Relationships are strong and this is reflected in very good collaborative working, for example in physical education. The ethos for learning is very good considering the poor accommodation. The response of pupils to the school's excellent expectations is that they behave very well and permanent exclusions are minimal. There were seventy-seven fixed term exclusions in the last full reporting year. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school site so that dilapidated accommodation survives and is not misused by them.
8. Pupils show a very good understanding of, and respect for, themselves and other people because of the positive impact of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision. Assemblies have a lot of meaning for pupils because the underlying messages make a real impact and are reinforced through reflection. Year 7 pupils listened in rapt attention to a very sincere address by the headteacher on homelessness and understanding those who suffer, and they learned very well. The pastoral period which covers personal, social and health education is carefully woven into the caring work of the school, making a very good contribution to pupils' moral and social development. Cultural development is good, particularly because of extra-curricular provision, for example a trip to India, where ability to pay was not a barrier to taking part. This enabled pupils to have close and continued contact with another culture and other religions, thus enriching deeply their understanding of others and making a very good contribution to racial harmony. The school works hard to address the potential problems of an area of monoculture, making it very inclusive and welcoming, so that racial harmony is good and bullying not an issue.
9. The strengths in pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities have been maintained since the last inspection.

### **Sixth form**

10. Attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory and is carefully monitored; punctuality is good. The high quality of behaviour and attitudes is maintained and makes a very good contribution to achievement. Sixth formers are mature young adults because of the school's focus on personal development. This allows them to develop their full potential and the school takes pride in their achievements. There is also a range of opportunities for sixth formers to continue good development of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through, for instance, the PSHE programme and a wide range of social activities.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education that is highly valued by parents and pupils. Teaching and learning are very good and this leads to good, often very good, achievement. Achievement is sometimes limited by the unsatisfactory quality of the accommodation and resources. Pupils are valued and cared for very well. The curriculum is satisfactory and partnerships with the community are very good.

### Teaching and learning

Both teaching and learning are very good overall. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good, leading to good learning. Assessment is good overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good overall. As a result, pupils learn very well.
- Teachers have very good command of their subjects and high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Pupils apply themselves to the task in hand and sustain concentration for long periods.
- Assessment at its best is very good, for instance in mathematics, but the application of school policies is inconsistent, as in some cases is teachers' understanding of the standards required by the National Curriculum.
- In some subjects older pupils lack opportunities to develop the skills of independent learning.

### Commentary

11. Teaching is now very good overall. Unsatisfactory teaching, which was present during the last inspection, has been eradicated. The best teaching is in Years 10 and 11, but all pupils go to their lessons expecting teaching that is good at least and in which expectations of their work and behaviour are made clear. They are rarely disappointed, and as a result most remain focussed on their learning throughout the school day. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 in mathematics, ICT, geography, history, art and design, and in citizenship. It is good in Years 10 and 11 in mathematics, geography and citizenship. In all other cases, it is very good.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 203 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9 (4.4%)	92 (45.3%)	75 (37.0%)	27 (13.3%)	0	0	0

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

12. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and have a variety of well-planned activities that appropriately challenge pupils at their stage of learning. For example, in an excellent Year 10 German lesson direct teaching was combined with activities in which pairs of pupils were required to speak German from memory. This rapidly developed confidence. Here as in most lessons, the learning was reinforced in a final plenary session summarising what had been learned. In a very good English lesson, lower

attaining Year 11 pupils had been set demanding but appropriate GCSE targets and knew what they had to do to achieve these. Pupils learnt very well as tasks were made clear and the teaching assistant supported well to make sure they were completed. Assessment was used well to ensure that pupils knew how to improve their work. Teachers have very good knowledge and skills in their subjects which they use to demonstrate work before pupils try. A very good example occurred in a Year 8 music lesson when the teacher improvised on the trombone before replicating the work on the keyboard. The pupils then worked enthusiastically in pairs, developing the keyboard improvisation further. In this and many other lessons opportunities were grasped to develop literacy skills and key words were displayed prominently in the classroom. In an excellent Year 11 science lesson, pupils with a range of attainment were able to understand advanced concepts about forces and friction because of effective use of models by the teacher. In this as in many other lessons, excellent behaviour and relationships within the classroom enabled a relentless focus on learning to be maintained. Teachers are good at using opportunities to develop basic skills such as ICT and to demonstrate links with other subjects such as citizenship and work-related learning. Homework is used well.

13. Many of these teaching skills – conveying good subject knowledge, demonstration, assessment, teaching at a good pace and having high expectations – are seen consistently throughout the school. However sometimes the impact on learning is less effective and this leads to teaching that is satisfactory. For instance in mathematics some Year 9 pupils had difficulty using a protractor and were left behind, failing to complete the work. In other cases poor quality accommodation, resources and learning environment do not encourage pupils to produce their best work. This was notable in some art lessons. These less good features are more common in Years 7 to 9 than they are with older pupils and students.
14. There is little variation in the quality of teaching throughout the school, although literacy is given more emphasis than numeracy in many subjects. Skills of ICT are well taught when the necessary equipment is available.
15. Teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is very good. They learn well in specialist lessons with a bilingual teacher and are rapidly acquiring a wide English vocabulary, including for example words such as 'metaphorical', enabling them to achieve well in all lessons.
16. Assessment is good. Teachers use classroom assessment well to help pupils to improve their work. However the school is moving from an internal grading system to one more focussed on the National Curriculum levels of attainment and this causes confusion for some pupils. In English, mathematics and science teachers have a good understanding of these levels, and they are used especially well in mathematics where pupils have a very good understanding of the progress they are making. In other subjects this is less true and there is evidence that assessments made in Year 9 are not always accurate, for instance in ICT, art and music.

## **Sixth form**

17. Teaching in the sixth form is also very good overall, although on occasions pupils' achievements do not quite match this. This is due to small class sizes placing limits on discussion between students and to the poor accommodation and resource levels for some subjects, for example art and design. Teaching is satisfactory in biology, good in psychology, art and design, and in business. It is very good in all other subjects inspected. In a very good chemistry lesson the very good relationships in the class led to lively questioning and rapid learning of the stereoisomerism of amino acids and the application of this in the pharmaceutical industry. In a Year 12 drama lesson conducted by two teachers their very good understanding of the subtleties of the play enabled the students' rapid acquisition of a similar level of understanding through discussion and short enactments. In ICT students have a good understanding of the 'Access' program and the teacher supports them well in developing an understanding of the process of normalisation.

### **The curriculum**

The school offers a sound curriculum. There are very good opportunities for curriculum enrichment, such as in drama and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Resources are satisfactory, but accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils of all ages are offered a wide range of subjects to study.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- There are very good enrichment opportunities for all pupils, which promotes personal development.
- Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow too many GCSE courses and are hence overworked, lowering achievement in some cases.

### **Commentary**

18. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are taught the full National Curriculum, enriched by opportunities to study drama and PSHE. They have many other opportunities to enrich their learning, for instance in music, PE and science. This is good provision. In some subjects, for instance art and PE, limited facilities and poor accommodation limit learning opportunities. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are offered a wide range of subjects to study to GCSE, which they grasp enthusiastically. More able students can study physics, chemistry and biology as separate subjects, as well as German or Spanish in addition to French. Other pupils have the opportunity to study vocational subjects such as business studies and manufacturing, and a small group in each year study a range of such subjects at Stroud College. However, some pupils study up to 14 subjects for GCSE which places undue pressure on them in terms of coursework and homework, and hence lowers standards and achievement. The school is rightly embarking on a review of its curriculum in Years 10 and 11.
19. For pupils of all ages, other subjects such as citizenship and work-related learning are built into the programmes of a number of subjects. For instance citizenship is taught in geography and RE among others. It is clearly identified for pupils and is monitored and coordinated. Pupils with special needs have an appropriate curriculum. There are currently no physically disabled pupils on the roll, but restricted access to some of the buildings would cause problems if there were. Those with gifts and talents have many opportunities to develop them, especially through very good enrichment programmes.

Since the acquisition of science specialist status in 2003 such opportunities have been further enhanced. Specialist status is bringing a range of benefits and the requirements of the plan are being met. There are equally good opportunities for boys and girls. The school analyses test and examination results for such groups, and when differences emerge appropriate and successful action is taken to remedy these. All pupils study RE and opportunities for collective worship are provided as the accommodation allows, although this is not daily for all pupils. There are effective programmes for sex and relationships education and good guidance for the next stages of education. In particular the school focuses on raising the aspirations of pupils and students through its links with higher education establishments; this is especially effective in this somewhat isolated area. The school has both the 'Sportsmark' and 'Artsmark' awards, which reflects the very good range of opportunities for such pursuits both within and outside the school day.

20. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. There have been some good recent additions such as the drama and 'science plus' centres. A new music centre is nearing completion, which will remove some of the worst accommodation. However, the gymnasium, accommodation for art and special needs are examples that remain poor and which have an impact on the standards that pupils can attain. The school has plans to improve the accommodation and has made vigorous attempts to obtain the necessary resources, for instance through two unsuccessful bids for Private Finance Initiative (PFI) credits. Difficulties with accommodation have caused everyday matters such as cleaning and some routine maintenance to be given an insufficient priority. Social areas are cramped and some toilet facilities are outdated, although most have recently been refurbished and cleaning of them is adequate. Teaching resources are satisfactory. In most subjects the teaching resources are adequate and in some, such as science, they are good. The school has significantly improved pupils' and students' access to computers but in some subjects such as business studies and English access remains limited. Access to resources is not helped by the fact that in most subjects some lessons take place away from the dedicated suite of rooms. The school's greatest and best resource is its very good team of well-qualified and suitably experienced teachers and effective support staff.

### **Sixth form**

21. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory. Students entering the sixth form are offered a wide range of courses at A-level and advanced vocational level and the school tries hard to meet their wishes, to the extent that some teaching groups are quite small. As a result, the students sometimes have fewer opportunities for interaction with others than usual. Intermediate courses offered are less popular with students. Pupils have opportunities to develop their key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT. The very good, wide range of enrichment opportunities offered elsewhere in the school is continued and enhanced. Links with higher education are especially strong and include the innovative opportunity to study Open University modules in science. The main sixth form accommodation block is poor, especially in respect of social areas for students, but funds have been obtained to replace it.

## Care, guidance and support

The school ensures the care and welfare of pupils very well but the unsatisfactory nature of some of the accommodation and cleaning means care, welfare, health and safety overall are only satisfactory. Pupils and students receive good support, advice and guidance and the school involves them very well in its work and development.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The unsatisfactory nature of some of the accommodation, cleaning and routine maintenance means that the safety of the environment sometimes relies on the very good behaviour of pupils and students.
- The care and welfare of pupils is very good because of the very strong team approach.
- The school consults very well with students.

## Commentary

22. This is a very caring school where very cohesive systems are developed and focussed through the co-ordinator of the personal development curriculum. This ensures consistent practice and very good provision throughout the school, making good use of outside agencies. Tutors and heads of year know pupils very well and their needs are recognized. The induction arrangements for pupils from primary school are so successful that it is a smooth transition in spite of the daunting site. There is very good first-aid provision because it is run by a professional and caring qualified nurse and colleague with excellent knowledge and understanding and very good administration systems. While giving very good support to pupils they are very alert to inappropriate opportunities for absenteeism. The administration of medicines follows clear procedures. Comprehensive arrangements for child protection are in place.
23. The unsatisfactory nature of the accommodation creates some hazards. The PFI 2003 bid identified physical hazards but the school feels constrained by its budget and has failed to prioritize so that cleaning and some routine maintenance are unsatisfactory. Health and safety guidance is in place but is not interpreted fully for these issues. Pupils justifiably complain about the lack of cleanliness and the state of some of the toilets. The extra length of the school day on Wednesday makes extra demands which younger pupils find difficult to cope with.
24. Systematic and well managed procedures ensure that personal development is tracked and promoted well. The card system encourages pupils to volunteer for support which is sympathetically organized to promote their self-esteem and maturity. The Learning Centre promotes inclusion very well to ensure that all pupils, whatever their needs, have the support they require. Reports to parents are satisfactory but changes in the system of reporting in Years 7 to 9 are causing some confusion between subjects. Pupils' personal and educational well-being is a priority for staff.
25. The school consults very well with pupils and students and fully involves them in its work so that they are influential in its development. They interviewed candidates for the post of headteacher and played a significant role in changing the caterers. Pupils express their views thoughtfully and responsibly because they know they will be taken

seriously. This process has made a very good contribution to promoting their personal development through engaging fully with their developing maturity.

## **Sixth form**

26. All aspects of care and welfare are very positive in the sixth form, however there are some issues related to accommodation of which the school is aware, such as the poor quality of the common room. The very good behaviour of students minimises its adverse impact on work. They have been consulted very fully regarding proposed sixth form development plans.

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

Links with parents are satisfactory. Links with the community and other schools and colleges are very good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Communication with parents, whilst sound, needs improvement.
- Links with the community are a strength, particularly because of the community bid within the science college status and the aspiration to become an extended school.
- Links with primary schools are strong and make a very good contribution to successful induction into Year 7.

## **Commentary**

27. Communication with the school has not been easy for a significant minority of parents: about a quarter in the survey do not feel well informed about how their child is getting on and nearly a fifth do not feel that the school seeks the views of parents and takes account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspection evidence confirms some of these concerns. Parents receive essential information about the school and their child's progress through, for example, meetings and reports. The school relies on its excellent website for some communication, but not all parents can access this. Annual reports are satisfactory overall, but they can be inconsistent between subjects and do not always say what a pupil needs to do to improve. The information in interim reports is likely to be inaccessible to some parents as it is based on numbers which can be difficult to interpret. They contain targets which are too general. Some parents are likely to be inhibited in approaching the school due to accommodation issues. There is no clear approach to the building and the foyer is uninviting. The new telephone system creates some problems of access as it is automated and it can be difficult to access a member of staff. However, once past these barriers staff are very keen to help. The recent tightening up of the school uniform code created some misunderstandings, as parents did not feel consulted.
28. Links with the community are greatly enhanced by the consortium bid within the specialist science college which involves productive links with a wide diversity of community groups. This has led to extra support for the curriculum and enabled the school to be more widely involved with community support. The sports hall is used by

the school by day and the community in the evening. Extra-curricular music groups enrich life in the community, for example a carol concert by Year 7. Pupils undertake work experience in the local area and there is a good range of visits and links in this country and abroad making a very good contribution to cultural provision. The school ensures that pupils' particular circumstances need not be a barrier to taking part.

29. Very good liaison with primary schools reflects the high quality of care provided for pupils, resulting in a very smooth transition. The transfer of information on pupils with partner schools is efficient and timely. There are very good arrangements to help pupils make appropriate choices about the next stage of their education and career pathways.

### **Sixth form**

30. Communication with parents is sound. Community links and with other schools and colleges are very good. Many students help outside the school, for example in primary school. They are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh award and work experience. There are involvements with local business and an introduction to public speaking. Field trips support the work of the curriculum well.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good overall. Governance is also good; governors both support and challenge staff. Management is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school at the heart of the community.
- Governors appropriately support and challenge the staff.
- The school collects appropriate data but has yet to use it to best effect.
- Routine monitoring has yet to address all aspects of the school's life.
- Innovation is well led.

### **Commentary**

31. The governing body is effective. It monitors the work of the school and challenges the management team where appropriate, for instance in setting targets. The school's strengths and weaknesses are, in the main, understood well. This promotes high standards. Statutory requirements are met, except that acts of collective worship are not held daily. An appropriate explanation of this has been given to parents. Governors are fully committed to inclusion and, in most respects, the school is very inclusive. They also receive and act on high quality advice from senior staff. They have due regard and appropriate policies concerning the safeguarding of children. The governing body is very aware of the shortcomings of the accommodation, including the limitations on access for the disabled, and has strived over a long period to resolve these, including by making two unsuccessful bids for PFI credits. The limited resources that have become available have been used well. The use of financial resources is carefully planned and monitored.



32. The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff is good. The headteacher has a vision for the school at the heart of the community, where it is the largest employer. He is pursuing his vision through an application for the school becoming an extended school where a range of community services including childcare, health and social services will be available. This is appropriate, although any impact on standards will need careful monitoring. He has the potential to be an excellent headteacher. Senior staff are hard working and committed. They have been very successful in ensuring high quality teaching through monitoring and the management of teachers' performance, and in resolving specific issues such as the weaknesses in English teaching identified at the last inspection. Senior staff are successful innovators, for instance in the successful bids for science specialist status and for the 'Investors in People' award, and in the designation by the British Council as an International School.
33. Management is also good. Honest and accurate evaluation of the quality of education the school provides is pursued with vigour and professionalism and is quickly becoming effective. The school collects much data on its own performance and some are used effectively, for instance to identify and resolve differences in the performance of groups of pupils such as boys and girls. In other cases the use of data is less sophisticated than is usual, for instance in identifying the progress made by pupils and groups of pupils within subjects such as French and art. Monitoring of routine matters has not identified the few weaknesses identified in the inspection, such as the quality of cleaning and the effectiveness of communication with parents. The school is committed to inclusion and is very successful in making all pupils feel valued. Weaknesses in this area are limited to issues caused by the accommodation.
34. There is a strong commitment to staff development and the school offers initial teaching training in partnership with the University of Gloucestershire. The school is successful at retaining effective staff and is taking appropriate steps to manage their workload. Finances are well managed and the principles of best value are applied to procurement, for instance in the recent exercise to let a catering contract in which pupils were appropriately involved.
35. These good features combine to create a school which promotes high standards and has an inclusive ethos and climate in which all pupils and students are, and feel, valued and supported. If the issues around the accommodation are resolved there is great potential for excellence.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,753,395
Total expenditure	4,713,784
Expenditure per pupil	3,489

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	127,909
Balance carried forward to the next	167,520

**Sixth form**

36. Management of the sixth form is effective. Students are very well supported and their performance and attendance are monitored carefully. The school's desire to meet as many of their wishes as possible leads to small groups sizes in some subjects. The accommodation, as in the rest of the school, needs considerable improvement and presents a barrier to learning.

## **WORK-RELATED LEARNING (WRL)**

Provision for work-related learning is very good; it fully meets statutory requirements.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good leadership and management ensure that all subjects contribute to learning about and for work.
- A high quality work experience programme enables pupils to learn through work.
- A wide range of vocational courses ensures that the individual needs and interests of pupils are met.
- Wide-ranging links with employers give very good support to vocational courses.
- Although careers guidance is good overall, some careers education lessons lack pace and challenge.

### **Commentary**

37. The Year 10 work experience programme affords pupils very good opportunities to gain direct experience of the workplace, and learn through work. Work experience is very well planned, with extensive preparation, target setting, and follow-up work undertaken. The school's careers convention, the Young Enterprise Learn to Earn and Enterprise in Action schemes, visits to the Cheltenham Skills Fair, and a wide range of visiting speakers also do much to deepen pupils' understanding of the world of work.
38. The school works closely with the Connexions service to ensure that pupils benefit from a coherent programme of careers education and guidance, and individual support with their action planning. Pupils have a very good understanding of the different pathways to continuing education, training or employment, of application procedures, and of the skills required for success at interview. However, some careers lessons, which are delivered within the framework of the PSHE programme, are rather pedestrian in nature.
39. WRL is very well supported in the curriculum with a wide range of vocational courses, provided both internally and through links with Stroud College. The school offers applied GCSEs in health and social care, manufacturing, ICT, and applied science. The Learning in a Vocational Environment (LIVE) programme with Stroud College offers small numbers of pupils opportunities to prepare for work in beauty, construction, motor vehicle engineering, ICT and the armed services. This link is very well organised, and the progress of pupils is carefully monitored.
40. Science specialist status has brought excellent community links, and the school has established valuable partnerships with industry and commerce. The wide range of business links provides very good opportunities for pupils to gain insights into the

world of work. The vocational subjects are particularly well supported. For example, applied science is enriched by links with the Co-op, Wickwar brewery and Renishaw, and ICT, with the Hilton group.

41. The school has also planned very well to ensure that all subjects have identified how they can help pupils recognise, develop and apply their skills for enterprise and employability, and learn how business enterprises from different sectors operate. As a result, many pupils have a good understanding of relevant ideas, and can apply them to work-related contexts. Most pupils demonstrate many of the skills and qualities that are valued in the workplace.
42. This is a very well led and managed area of learning. Excellent planning has woven the disparate strands of WRL into a coherent, high quality programme that makes effective use of available resources to meet its aims. It is raising achievement, because pupils can increasingly see the relevance of their studies to their future education, training or employment.

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

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

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

##### **English**

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- Standards are well above average in Years 9 and 11.
- Pupils achieve very well because of very good teaching and learning and excellent assessment procedures.
- The leadership is excellent, as is management.
- Some elements of accommodation are unsatisfactory and the department has limited access to ICT resources.

##### **Commentary**

43. The standards of pupils joining the school are average in English. In the 2003 national tests for Year 9 standards were well above the national average, as they have been for the last three years. They were equally strong in 2004. Pupils currently in Year 9 are reaching similar standards. All pupils are entered for GCSE in English language and in 2003 attainment was above the national average and good in comparison with similar schools. Overall results in 2004 were better but fewer pupils were awarded the highest grades. Pupils are set for English and about 60 per cent take English literature although they do not have any extra lesson time. In 2003 results were well above the national average. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are well above average. The trend is for standards to be above the national average and for there to be no marked difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving well in all year groups, as are those who are using English as an additional language.
44. Achievement is very good by Years 9 and 11 because of the very good teaching and learning and the very positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils. Lessons are very well planned to meet the learning needs of all groups of pupils because assessment information is used exceptionally well. Challenging lessons provide a range of activities that engage higher attaining pupils and those who are less secure in their learning are well supported. There is a clear focus on basic skills. In a lesson on basic grammar pupils made excellent gains in learning because of the pace and activity of the lesson. All lessons have clear objectives, shared with pupils, and learning is reviewed at the end of the lesson. This provides valuable opportunities for assessment of understanding and the provision of extra challenges. Pupils assess their own work and that of others and they have a clear idea of how to improve because marking is very thorough and provides clear advice and guidance.

45. Pupils are confident in expressing their views and many are highly articulate. They enjoy discussion and are able to communicate very well. In Years 9 and 11 standards in speaking and listening skills are very good. There are very good opportunities for the development of these skills in a wide range of activities including discussion and role-play. Year 11 pupils are confident and effective in their use of language and they are prepared very well for this aspect of GCSE assessment.
46. Reading and comprehension skills are developed well and standards are above average by Year 9. This level of attainment is sustained and the majority of pupils have the skills required to reach the higher grades at GCSE. While wider reading is encouraged the department would like more time to encourage more reading activities and to ensure that as many pupils as possible share their teachers' love of literature. Pupils in Year 7 are given an induction to the library and they are encouraged to use it frequently because the quality and range of available books is improving.
47. In Years 7 to 9 the highest attaining pupils write exceptionally well and work related to poetry and novels used in class is often very good. Average work shows some errors in basic punctuation and spelling but is usually thoughtful and well presented. Displays celebrate pupils' work and also provide valuable information on how writing can be improved. In Years 10 and 11 work is based on a very good knowledge and understanding of the examination texts. All pupils are able to write in a variety of ways to suit their audience and purpose and letter writing is developed particularly well. Year 7 pupils particularly enjoy examining the use of emotive language through a study of whales.
48. Homework tasks are used very effectively to develop skills in writing and research. Use of computers is limited by lack of resources in the classroom. Pupils do use them to complete research tasks and coursework and standards are secure. Teaching often has excellent features, particularly when the focus is on independent learning and group work. However learning is sometimes adversely affected by the unsatisfactory nature of some accommodation. English rooms are dispersed around the school and this makes communication between teachers more difficult. Some single lessons are very short although available time is used very well.
49. The head of department provides excellent leadership and has a clear view of the strengths of the department and the ways in which it can develop. Effective teamwork is a feature of this very successful department because management is very good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been excellent as at that time management of English was unsatisfactory. Standards have improved and the emphasis on assessment for learning has transformed the department. Teaching and learning have improved despite the challenges presented by unsatisfactory accommodation and the reduction in teaching time since the introduction of separate drama lessons.

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

50. Literacy skills across the school are good. All departments are making a valuable contribution to improving standards because the literacy strategy is fully in place and the coordinator is very effective. Drama is providing many opportunities for pupils to express themselves and to listen to others. The school councils and activities related to

citizenship are providing a good range of opportunities for the development of communication skills. The library plays a key role by providing an improving range of books, periodicals and newspapers and a high level of support for pupils.

## **Modern Foreign Languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students reach well above average standards and achieve very well in German and Spanish.
- Boys are not achieving as well as girls in GCSE French.
- Teachers use the foreign language as much as possible and help pupils to do the same.
- Pupils behave very well and have positive attitudes to language learning.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a very good range of trips and exchanges.

## Commentary

51. Results in the 2003 GCSE Spanish examinations were well above average. Almost all students gained passes at grades A\*-C with an average grade on the A/B borderline. Results in the 2003 French GCSE examinations were close to the national average. The school enters a wider ability range of students for GCSE French than is the case nationally, and these results therefore represent good achievement. Overall, the provisional results for 2004 are similar, although an already noticeable gap in performance between boys and girls has widened significantly. Girls on average achieved a grade C, whereas boys only achieved between a D and an E.
52. Standards seen in Years 9 and 11 in both German and Spanish are well above the national average and pupils achieve very well. They make rapid progress in Years 8 and 9, building up a good stock of vocabulary. In Spanish, recent GCSE mock examination results are significantly above students' initial target grades. In Year 10 German, pupils speak with a good degree of confidence and are learning to apply some complex grammatical rules. In Year 9, standards in French are above the national average, representing good achievement. This is particularly noticeable in listening and speaking, and is because teachers use the language as much as possible. In Years 10 and 11 standards are closer to the national average. This is mostly because many pupils who were in set 1 in Year 9 have chosen to continue with Spanish to GCSE.
53. Pupils behave very well in their languages lessons. They come to lessons expecting to work, listen well and participate sensibly in pairwork and groupwork. In one lesson at the end of a long day, Year 11 pupils held conversations about holidays for 10 minutes and needed no reminders about speaking in French.
54. The quality of teaching and learning is good in French; in German and Spanish it is very good. In nearly all lessons teachers use the foreign language as the main means of communication. They also expect pupils to use the language as much as possible and they have developed a good system of key phrases which pupils use for routine requests such as asking for the meaning of words. In the majority of lessons pupils have good opportunities to work in pairs or small groups and are therefore able to learn new material at their own pace. For example in a Year 9 lesson pupils reminded each other how to form the future tense and practised making up sentences. Some teaching is very good or excellent. For example, in a very lively German lesson pupils practised prepositions, first through a song and then role-play activities where they were expected to work from memory. A key feature of this lesson was the wide range of learning activities which involved and motivated all the pupils. In a Year 9 lesson with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, the teacher's thoughtful planning and consistent use of praise and rewards created a very good learning atmosphere. However, about a quarter of lessons, although satisfactory, were not as strong. The overall pace was slower and teaching methods less effective because pupils had fewer opportunities to become actively engaged in learning.
55. There are very good opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities. The Year 7 visit to Normandy, for example, is very popular. The German exchange and the cultural visit to Spain operate over a two-year cycle and thus match the

curriculum. There are strong links with partner primary schools and also links with other local schools for language festivals.

56. The leadership of languages is good. There is a very good emphasis on teaching in the foreign language and a useful set of key phrases are taught to help pupils learn in the classroom without resorting to English. The introduction and promotion of the government's Key Stage 3 strategy and languages framework is helping to raise standards. Subject leaders do not, however, have access to sufficiently good quality and timely data to help analyse strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance and to inform future development planning. A suitable programme of lesson observation is in place but some further work is required to ensure that all teaching and learning meets the generally high standards seen.
57. At the time of the last inspection the use of ICT was identified as a weakness. This area has been developed well. Pupils regularly use word processing and desktop publishing software. Pupils in a Year 10 class were creating presentations using PowerPoint or Publisher. There is a modern languages website with practice activities for pupils. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good; they are aware of the next steps in pupils learning.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The attitude and behaviour of the pupils are very good.
- Very good teamwork helps to maintain above average standards.
- Accommodation is barely adequate in providing for a stimulating learning environment.

### **Commentary**

58. When pupils enter the school their standards are average. Standards in the Year 9 national tests in 2003 were well above average compared to all schools as well as those in a similar context. The pupils' achievement at this stage is, therefore, very good compared to their prior attainment on entry to the school with an increasing proportion of pupils achieving the highest levels. Since the last report there has been year-on-year improvement similar to the national trend. The 2004 test results indicate that standards remain well above average compared to the previous year with an increasing proportion achieving the highest levels. Current standards of work are well above average. Pupils are well engaged in the new courses and achieving very well.
59. Standards in the GCSE mathematics examination in 2003 were above average, with girls performing better than the boys. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades was broadly in line with the national average. All pupils entered for the mathematics examination achieved a GCSE A\*-G grade. The pupils' achievement compared to their attainment when in Year 9 was satisfactory because above average standards had been maintained. Standards in the 2004 examination were at a similar level. Girls and boys performed equally well. Current standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average; standards of work seen by higher attaining pupils are well above average and all pupils are achieving well. Achievement is better than seen in recent examinations because of recent improvements in teaching.



60. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good with some very good features. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. Lessons are planned well and teachers are aware of the next stages in pupils' learning. Work is intellectually demanding, making good use of pupils' previously taught skills. For example, higher attaining Year 8 pupils demonstrated successfully, using the interactive whiteboard, their knowledge and understanding of equivalent fractions, decimals and percentages as a mental starter to a lesson on proportion. The National Numeracy Strategy is consistently applied though the end of lesson review to give some understanding of how pupils have progressed is frequently overlooked. Teachers do not always use consistent strategies for monitoring pupils' understanding during lessons. Good use is made of 'bite size' activities to motivate lower attaining pupils whose concentration span is short.
61. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good. Pupils can work both independently and collaboratively and persevere with problems when difficulties arise. The relationships between the pupils and the teacher and between the pupils themselves are very good. Pupils listen well and contribute much in lessons, supporting the normally brisk pace. Where teaching is very good learning objectives are shared with the pupils; there is a good balance between theory and practice; use is made of open questions that challenge pupils' thinking and understanding; and there is provision for pupils to evaluate their own work. Homework is set and marked regularly though opportunities to extend the gifted and talented pupils are not evident. Resources that are available, including ICT and the interactive whiteboard, are used well. Pupils with special educational needs make progress as good as that of their peers when supported by teaching assistants.
62. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is good; often it is better than this. Teachers' command of the subject and appreciation of examination requirements are very good. There is good continuity of learning from Year 9. The acquisition of new skills and understanding building upon previous work is good. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils, although opportunities to extend the most able further are not planned for. There is a strong work ethic and good use is made of the time available. As a result pupils' application and productivity are very good. The quality of recorded work is good and is an aid to review and revision although poor or incomplete work sometimes goes unchallenged. Homework is set and marked regularly, with diagnostic comment by the teacher to aid pupils' learning. Assessment procedures are good and pupils are aware of their personal targets.
63. The new leadership of the department is very good, as the teaching staff have been developed into an effective team committed to raising standards. They provide good role models for the pupils. Issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed. The quality of teaching and learning is of a consistent standard. The collection and analysis of assessment information are thorough and aid curriculum development. Opportunities for pupils to assess their own progress are an integral part of the assessment process. There is clear vision for improvement with a variety of initiatives in place, for example, the increasing use of the interactive whiteboard, the intervention programmes, mathematics Master Classes in the primary school, a focus on the quality of Year 11 pupils' examination coursework and the introduction of GCSE statistics in Year 10. Management of the department is good. Monitoring and evaluation of existing policies and initiatives are in place although the dissemination and sharing of good teaching practices are not occurring frequently enough to be effective. The department Handbook needs to be simplified to be of optimum use. The quality of accommodation is barely adequate though the department does much to provide for a stimulating learning environment. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

64. Pupils' numeracy skills are secure although they make frequent use of the calculator. Pupils can graph, measure, interpret and apply numerical information although opportunities to rehearse basic arithmetic processes, estimate, analyse and test are not strongly promoted across the curriculum. The National Numeracy Strategy is consistently applied in Years 7 to 9

within the mathematics department and there has been systematic planning in order that mathematics contributes to quality and standards in other subjects. For example, in geography, the mathematics department teaching staff assist during the annual Year 9 field study programme in the Forest of Dean. Work focuses on river flow, water volume and handling data. Other subjects, notably science, art and design, physical education and design and technology support a broad range of numerical experiences. There has been an audit of provision and training to raise teachers' awareness of numeracy, although no appointment with responsibility for numeracy has been made. There is a whole school numeracy policy which encourages departments to identify and take advantage of the opportunities within schemes of work and programmes of study to promote the use of numeracy. The mathematics department endeavours to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the work of departments across the curriculum and build on pupils' skills. Inspection evidence and national test and examination results indicate that pupils' competence in mathematics across the curriculum is good and not a barrier to learning.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is very good overall, and some is excellent.
- Pupils' achievements in lessons and examinations are very good.
- Behaviour and interest in learning are very good because teachers work hard to foster them.
- Records of marks and the support given to pupils are very good.
- The gaining of science college status has had a very positive impact on learning.

### Commentary

65. Pupils' results in the Year 9 tests in 2003 were well above average and when compared with their earlier average results at entry, they were in the top five per cent of schools nationally. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average and very good in comparison with the pupils' Year 9 results. Results improved significantly in 2004, and boys and girls did equally well. Overall, pupils' achievements in tests and examinations are very good and results are improving.
66. In lessons in Years 7 to 11 all pupils' achievements are very good because practical skills are learned quickly and pupils master very demanding concepts. ICT is used well to provide very challenging problem solving activities about electrolysis or photosynthesis. ICT resources provided from science college funding have had a very positive effect on pupils' achievement and interest in science. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs are very good. Standards of practical skill and understanding shown by the most able are high: overall standards of work seen are well above average in both Years 9 and 11. Boys and girls do equally well and pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in science are above average.
67. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 are both very good; in a very large proportion of lessons they are very good or excellent. Teachers' knowledge of their subject and of the means of teaching it are very good. Lesson plans are varied and provide interesting activities that are well matched to the needs of pupils. As a result pupils work hard and are very well motivated. Good planning provides sequences of short

tasks that keep the attention of less able pupils so that they learn well. Relationships in lessons are very good; instructions are clear so that pupils know what to do and learn successfully; they become confident learners who follow instructions carefully; during practical activities they work cooperatively, safely and quickly. Teachers work hard to foster these very positive attitudes to work. Teaching assistants usually provide very good support. In the best lessons collaboration with teachers is very good and pupils with special educational needs learn very well. In a very small number of lessons some pupils chatter too much and more effective methods of preventing this are needed.

68. Leadership and management are both very good. The national strategy for science in Years 7 to 9 is used very expertly in many lessons, resulting in a high degree of interest amongst pupils of all abilities. The school has achieved science college status and the developments that flow from this are very well led and managed, it has led to improvements in staffing and new courses, for example in the separate sciences, that have produced a doubling of interest in A-level courses. Visits to universities and from university staff are used to interest pupils in higher education and gifted and talented pupils are well provided for. Records of marks are very thorough and marking provides pupils with good advice. Pupils understand the targets that are set for them and are regularly involved in assessing their own progress and identifying areas in which they need to improve.
69. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and work is now demanding for all pupils. Use of the national strategy for science in Years 7 to 9 and science college status have led to improvements in teaching, the curriculum, resources and staffing. In particular demanding courses in the separate sciences are very well suited to the needs of higher attainers.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE examination results in ICT are well above average.
- Pupils show very good attitudes to the subject and are well motivated in lessons.
- In Years 8 and 9 there is insufficient teaching time to cover the full range of skills in ICT.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 are too generous.
- Good learning resources and accommodation in specialist ICT lessons provide good conditions for learning.

### **Commentary**

70. GCSE examination results in 2003 were well above the national average and improved further in 2004. Teachers' own assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 are well above average.

71. In Year 9, standards are average. Pupils in Year 7 enter the school with below average standards, which means they achieve well in Years 7 to 9. However, the teachers' own assessments of pupils in Year 9 are too generous. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils reach the expected standards in desktop publishing, the use of spreadsheets and databases. They present information using specialist software and adapt these for different audiences. They use the Internet well to research information and to communicate electronically. However, they do not yet use digital cameras independently, nor 'on screen' control in specialist ICT lessons. Good achievement by Year 9 is evident in pupils' standards of computer-based tasks, their knowledge and understanding of the subject and good attitudes. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, who do one of the three GCSE examination courses available, work closely to the examination criteria to reach well above average standards in work seen, representing very good achievement. Other pupils achieve average standards for ICT in work seen in other subjects. They develop a very good level of confidence and work very well within groups as well as independently to master more advanced ICT skills. All pupils respond very well to the high expectations of the teachers and show very good attitudes to their work.
72. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and provide a good range of planned tasks and activities to involve pupils in their learning. Lessons are very well structured and teachers ensure pupils' learning is underpinned with relevant knowledge. Teachers support all pupils well, including those with special educational needs, which ensures good learning for all pupils. However, there is less coverage of the national strategy for ICT because pupils in Years 8 and 9 do not have a dedicated lesson in specialist ICT over the course of each year. As a result pupils develop fewer specialist skills. Although teaching resources are good, in some classrooms without data projectors teachers are unable to use the national strategy resources, which has an adverse impact on pupils' learning. Marking helps pupils to improve and they are included well in the assessment of their own work and evaluating the work of their peers. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop numeracy skills, which are average in Year 7 to 9 but improve considerably in Years 10 and 11. Teachers encourage co-operation in lessons, resulting in very good relationships and attitudes.
73. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a clear vision for the subject, supported by teachers with a shared commitment to improvement. Considerable investment in ICT resources has contributed very well to raising standards although the lack of data projectors in some specialist rooms restricts the use of valuable teaching materials. In Years 8 and 9 pupils are given less curriculum time, which lowers their standards. Since the previous inspection improvement has been very good. The next stage of development is to strengthen the assessment procedures to enable the department to make better use of more reliable data. Very good technician support contributes very well to the daily management of the resources in the school. The ratio of pupils per computer in the school is now better than the national average.

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

74. The use of ICT is now developing well in subjects across the curriculum. Pupils show good competence in the subject at all levels. The use of ICT is very good in science, and good in mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. It is satisfactory in English, art, geography, history and music. However, the use of ICT to support pupils with special needs requires further development. In the work seen during the inspection

the very good use of ICT in science reflected the very good range of resources and chosen software for problem solving, which was both challenging and motivating for pupils. Skills in data logging are developed satisfactorily. There is a suite of 20 computers adjacent to the mathematics department. Good application of ICT in mathematics enabled pupils to have 'hands on' experience of ICT to enhance their learning in mathematics. Year 11 pupils use it well to support their coursework. Pupils of all attainment levels, including those who are lower attaining, benefit well from this experience. The interactive whiteboard is used well to download resources from the internet and enable teachers to include pupils in the learning in lessons. In design and technology, good use is made of readily available resources for a whole range of activities including a very good level of subject co-ordinated software. Pupils readily use the internet for research and select what they use appropriately. The lack of some sophisticated computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing resources restricts what pupils can do. In modern foreign languages, pupils use desktop publishing well and the school website is used effectively to support the work in the subject. In physical education good work was seen when GCSE pupils considered their personal training programmes. They word process their coursework and use the internet for research, and higher attaining pupils in particular summarise data and present it in the form of charts and graphs.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

Provision in history is **very good**.

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

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The achievement of pupils, especially from Year 9 onwards, is very good.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and learn well.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

75. In the teachers' own assessments of standards in 2004 at the end of Year 9, the number of pupils achieving level 5 or higher was above average. Pupils gained a high proportion of grades at level 6 and above. At GCSE the percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in 2003 was above the national average, with a high proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* or A. In 2004, results were broadly in line with the historic national average; girls outperformed boys.
76. Standards are average when pupils start at the school. By Year 9, standards are above average, representing good achievement. Pupils can carry out historical enquiries, form conclusions, and communicate their findings. By Year 11, achievement is very good and standards are well above average, representing an improvement on recent examination results because of better teaching. Pupils show great skill in handling primary source evidence. In all years, literacy is encouraged by the regular emphasis on key words, and accurate, technical writing. ICT is used occasionally in Years 7 to 9; its use is becoming more frequent as the result of an additional ICT room this year. In Years 10 and 11, pupils find the departmental website valuable to their learning.
77. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9. It is well structured, varied, and makes good use of time, enabling pupils to master higher-level skills, particularly in a Year 9 class where pupils drew on

complex evidence to assess and explain the changes in the position of women in Britain before and since the First World War. Pupils are taught in ability sets. Those with special educational needs achieve well. However, assessment is not fully developed, so pupils are not aware of their performance against National Curriculum levels, or what they need to do to improve. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good, and often excellent. Pupils are stretched and stimulated, and role-play is used to good effect, for example when Year 11 pupils illustrated the development of penicillin from a sequence of improvisations they created, based on source evidence. Pupils acquire an understanding of social, moral, and cultural issues, and are prepared to become good citizens. Year 7 pupils learned about the principles of government by holding a mock election for a Roman tribune, linking the experience to their understanding of how the school was structured.

78. The head of department provides very good leadership, based on her knowledge, enthusiasm, concern for pupils, and the excellent personal example she sets. She monitors performance data and patterns, and takes necessary action. She deploys her team of specialist teachers well, ensuring coverage of all aspects of the department's work. Extra-curricular provision is extensive, and enrichment is often targeted at gifted and talented pupils. Overall, history has maintained high standards and made good progress since the last inspection.

## Geography

Provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and improving.
- Achievement, particularly by boys, is not as good as it should be at GCSE.
- Very effective use of the latest visual presentation technologies in teaching is raising standards.
- ICT needs to be used more by pupils.
- Citizenship, numeracy and literacy opportunities are well developed.

## Commentary

79. Overall, GCSE results are below average. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were average for girls but boys' results were significantly below average. Fewer pupils than normal attained the highest grades. Attainment in geography, especially by boys, was lower than for other subjects. Standards have been declining, rather than keeping pace with the national trend of improvement. GCSE results in 2004 remained below average. Standards were average in the teachers' own evaluations of standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003; they were higher in 2004.
80. On entry to the school, pupils have average standards of geographical skills and knowledge. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language, show good achievement in Years 7 to 9 as the standard of Year 9 work seen is above average. In Years 10 and 11 pupils make good progress in lessons. Achievement, which has been unsatisfactory in GCSE examinations, is now satisfactory in Year 11, where standards of work seen are

average. This does not reflect fully the recent improvements in teaching and learning because of earlier shortcomings.

81. Teaching and learning are good. There has been significant recent change in the teaching staff and teachers are very well prepared, well qualified and experienced and employ a wide range of strategies to make work interesting, relevant and enjoyable. In one excellent lesson Year 7 pupils used an interactive whiteboard to model a 3-dimensional Cotswold landscape by inputting data from the local Ordnance Survey map. Behaviour is well managed. Pupils have good opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. Active teaching and learning methods promote good learning and understanding. High quality fieldwork at Cheddar Gorge, Cribbs Causeway and around the school enhances geographical understanding for pupils in all years. Tasks and materials are well matched to the needs of all pupils, including good provision to support those with special educational needs and to extend higher attaining pupils. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed well. The latest technologies are employed to fullest effect and greatly enhance quality and accelerate pace of learning. A particularly effective example gave all Year 10 classes access to the most recent Environment Agency photographs and video interviews about River Severn flood management. GCSE candidates have clear targets and are keen to attain their expected grades. There is good emphasis on examination expectations. Pupils respond well to consistently challenging teaching and so learning is good. Homework extends learning well. High standards are achieved in GCSE coursework.
82. Leadership of the department is good and is addressing previous weaknesses. Planning is very good. Assessment is good. Good leadership by a new department head is strongly focused on raising examination standards. Attainment data is analysed and used critically to identify opportunities to raise performance. Good progress has been made by the teaching team in integrating National Curriculum assessment opportunities into updated schemes of work. More emphasis is needed on pupils' use of subject vocabulary and examination terminology in all years.
83. Citizenship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities are well developed. Geography makes a very good contribution to pupils' awareness of other cultures. Particularly effective work was seen in Year 10 on issues of global food distribution and in Year 9 about economic and refugee migration. There is some use of ICT by pupils in all years but this is acknowledged to still need development. Monitoring of pupils' books is systematic.
84. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory but the marked and very recent changes in leadership and management mean that potential for further improvement is good.

## **Religious Education**

Provision for religious education is **very good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Well above average GCSE results represent very good achievement for pupils of all backgrounds and abilities.

- Very good teaching promotes very good learning.
- Very good leadership and management have driven very good improvement.
- Marking does not always do enough to help pupils understand how to improve their work.

## Commentary

85. In the 2003 GCSE Short Course examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was broadly average. This represented satisfactory achievement in relation to their prior attainment. Standards were lower than in the 2002 examination, when they were well above the national average. The 2003 results represented a “blip” in a pattern otherwise of well above average standards over time. The school moved quickly to address the decline, and in the 2004 examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C rose again to pre-2003 levels. This represented very good achievement, particularly because virtually all pupils were entered for the examination and gained a pass grade.
86. By Year 9, standards are above average, and achievement is good in relation to the pupils' average standards at entry. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the origins and distinctive features of Christianity and other principal religions of the country. They understand why their adherents' beliefs are important to them, and how they shape their lives, and they can make a thoughtful personal response to religious questions. Standards in Year 11 work seen are well above average, and achievement is good. Pupils have, for example, a very good grasp of religious and secular insights into contemporary moral and social issues, and their analytical, interpretative and evaluative skills are highly developed.
87. The quality of teaching and learning is at least good in all lessons, and is very good overall. In the best lessons, teachers have a very good grasp of their subject, and clear aims, which they share with pupils. They plan very well to achieve their objectives, challenging pupils with a wide variety of interesting activities and tasks, which are very well matched to their individual needs. Boys and girls of all capabilities and backgrounds learn and achieve very well, because teachers ensure that they play a full and active part in lessons.
88. Teachers have very high expectations, and engender excellent relationships in the classroom. Pupils give of their best, because the best is expected. They can take risks in their learning, because they know that their teachers and peers will receive their contributions with respect. Where learning is less secure, marking, though conscientious and supportive, does not always do enough to help pupils understand how to raise the standard of their work.
89. Very good leadership ensures a clear vision of how to raise standards. Very good management has driven very good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards are now very much higher in all years, because of significant improvements to the quality of teaching and learning, and the enrichment of the curriculum through the introduction of a GCSE Short Course for all, and of GCE A-level courses in the sixth form. Provision for teaching the locally agreed syllabus in the sixth form has also been much improved, and with the planned extension of the conference programme fully meets statutory requirements.

## TECHNOLOGY



## Design and technology

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils reach well above average standards in all areas by the end of Year 11.
- There is very good teaching because of the very good match of teachers' expertise to the needs of the subject.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and enthusiasm for the subjects are very good.
- The lack of specialist ICT resources restricts the learning.
- Accommodation needs refurbishment.

### Commentary

90. Examination results in 2003 were well above the national average for similar schools. A significant number of pupils achieve at the highest grades. Results compare very well with other school subjects. The unconfirmed results for 2004 are slightly lower than usual but are still well above the national average, Work seen in lessons continues to reflect the high standards achieved year on year.
91. Most pupils make good progress, attaining above average standards by Year 9. This represents good achievement given pupils' broadly average attainment on entry. Pupils are given every opportunity to design and make in a wide range of materials and their creativity is carefully and very successfully nurtured throughout all projects. Pupils are mindful of health & safety expectations and work well together in a supportive manner. Most pupils measure accurately and have good literacy skills. Product research is integral to their design work and they present their survey findings with good analytical skills. The use of ICT for research and presentation is good.
92. In Year 11 standards are well above average and pupils of different capabilities achieve very well by the end of the year. They apply design principles and processes effectively to increasingly demanding design and production tasks. Manufacture is well planned and final products are well made and true to the original design specifications. Coursework reflects good literacy skills and they manage their work very well. In the work of lower attaining pupils graphical communication skills are weak with insufficient attention paid to rendering techniques and production of three-dimensional effects where required. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
93. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a very secure command of their subjects and plan work very effectively. They expect pupils to work hard and pupils respond accordingly. As a result pupils' attitudes towards learning are very good. They are enthusiastic and keenly respond to the intellectual challenges set them. Questioning and interventions by teachers are very effective. Formal assessment practice is very good, as is the very high level of verbal assessment which provides pupils with clear feedback on the strengths and weaknesses in their work. Work is consistently marked and well matched to National Curriculum levels and examination criteria.
94. Leadership is very good with a very clear vision for the direction and ethos of the subject. The entire teaching staff share in this. The organisation and management of

the department's work are very good. Close attention is paid to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to ensure that high standards are maintained. Technical staff provide very good support for all work but support time in food and textiles is barely adequate. The food and textiles rooms need refurbishment. One workshop is very small, making conditions cramped. There are difficulties for teachers in storing coursework, displaying pupils' work and in enabling theoretical work in clean areas. Despite these limitations teachers make every effort to ensure pupils work in safe, welcoming teaching environments. Progress since the previous inspection is good since most of the issues identified then have been resolved and the very high standards have been maintained.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

The focus was on art and design, and music, but one Year 9 **drama** lesson was sampled. The new drama suite is being used very well and teaching in the lesson observed was very good. However the time available for drama is limited in Years 7 to 9 and pupils have too little time to develop their ideas or to explore wider themes.

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils learn skills and techniques for working in two and three dimensions very well.
- Standards are above average and achievement is good.
- More imaginative integration of research and practical work would enable some pupils to achieve the highest standards.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, and are very good in Years 10 and 11.
- The department provides a well-balanced curriculum with meagre resources.
- Deterioration in standards of maintenance and décor have been minimised by the commitment and efforts of staff.

### **Commentary**

95. From average standards on entry, pupils make very good progress in their learning of skills and techniques in two- and three-dimensional work. Their research skills are good but pupils do not always integrate practical and theoretical work so well. Attainment is above average by Year 9.
96. A larger than average proportion of pupils, particularly boys, take art at GCSE. A\*-C results have been above average in the two recent years, but with no A\*s. Results are in line with the school average, but pupils generally do better in art than in their other subjects. With very limited funding, the department manages to provide pupils with a good range of curriculum experience, including ceramics. By Year 11, observed standards are also above average, with Year 10 showing very high potential. Pupils of all abilities achieve well in all years, including those with special educational needs. Practical skills remain very good, although achievement is constrained by the poor accommodation and limited resources. Seamless, imaginative presentation of pupils'

visual and research work, with better analytical commentary in sketchbooks, would lift the standards of some work, especially that of very high attaining pupils.

97. Teaching and learning are good overall and are very good in Years 10 and 11. The teaching team is strong, with expertise across a good range of media which teachers transmit very effectively to their pupils. Time in lessons is used well, although some pupils would benefit from more frequent reference to the links between the artists they are studying and their own work. Pupils enjoy their work and behave very well, rising to teachers' high expectations and developing confidence in their abilities. For GCSE, teachers build on pupils' existing skills very well, with high demands for individually interpretive work. From early in Year 10, work shows a good level of personal response. Assessment of individuals' work is good, with very good oral feedback in most lessons. Teaching on a one-to-one basis is a very strong feature of the department's expertise. Standardisation in assessment of National Curriculum levels in Years 7-9 is required to ensure that these are accurate.
98. The department is well led and managed. Despite low funding, a good curriculum range has been maintained. Stable, experienced staff provide pupils with good role models. Unsatisfactory aspects of the accommodation are managed well. Standards have risen since the last report and improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department has done all it can to improve its own environment, including by the staff painting and decorating the rooms. This was necessitated by deterioration in standards of maintenance. Significant barriers to good learning have been minimised by the commitment of staff.

## **Music**

Provision for music is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching leads to better than expected standards.
- The department is very well led.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes to music.
- Extra-curricular music is of a high standard.

## Commentary

99. Standards in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above average and 2004 results are similar. Pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11 and this represents good achievement. Teacher assessments in 2003 show well above average standards and those for 2004 are not significantly lower. Pupils enter the school with below average standards in music and make very good progress in Years 7 to 9, showing very good achievement, so that standards of work seen are above average in Year 9. Pupils sing very well in class, as was also noted in the last inspection. A very effective starter activity was seen in a Year 9 class where pupils quickly learnt an African welcome song. They sang enthusiastically in three parts using dynamics and changing textures, which led seamlessly to a lesson where pupils composed their own rhythmic ostinato pieces. Standards of work seen are above average in Year 11. In Year 11, pupils listened attentively to a revision lesson on a previously completed examination question. They showed good technical knowledge of musical terms and elements, amending their scripts effectively. In a Year 10 lesson 'The Rite of Spring' was used well as a stimulus for pupils to compose their own ostinato pieces. Pupils' literacy skills are very well supported by the department and the use of computers is good in Years 10 and 11. There are insufficient computers generally and this limits pupils' experiences, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
100. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is consistently of a very good standard and enables pupils to achieve very well. Teachers are enthusiastic, have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons well. Explanations are very clear and work is modelled effectively for pupils, homework extends pupils' learning very well. Pupils enjoy their music lessons and work enthusiastically in pairs, individuals or in groups. The matching of work for pupils of all abilities needs to be more explicit in lessons so that higher attainers are constantly challenged. The sharing of assessment criteria is not sufficiently developed to tell the pupils at which levels they are working and how to improve their work. Pupils need more opportunities to assess their own and others' composing and performing work.
101. Leadership is very good and management is very good. There is a clear vision for the department and a commitment to high standards. There is a team of experienced teachers. The work of the department is very well supported by a team of dedicated peripatetic teachers. A strength of the department is the extra-curricular activities, particularly the Rednock Singers, the senior orchestra and swing band who perform to a very high standard. The department has a regular programme of concerts and performances both in this country and abroad and contributes enormously to pupils' cultural and social development. Accommodation is poor and this makes improvement since the last inspection unsatisfactory although the department has maintained above average standards. At the time of the inspection, a new purpose built music block was under construction, which will facilitate even higher standards.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Years 9 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are very good; teachers plan lessons using a range of activities that allow all groups of pupils to learn very well.
- The subject leader has a very strong commitment to improvement and success.
- The gymnasium is outdated; the on-site grass pitch area is inadequate.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 cannot be delivered in enough depth, due to lack of time.
- The very good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning.

## Commentary

102. Standards in lessons and in work of Year 9 and Year 11 pupils are above average. Pupils are achieving well across all years, given their average attainment in physical education on entry in Year 7 and the lack of curriculum time in Years 10 and 11. GCSE examination results are consistently above average, with the exception of 2004, when standards were average. Year 11 pupils' results in physical education are better than those in most of their other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs, and the talented, achieve well. Higher attaining pupils are successful in a range of sports at district, county and national levels.
103. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in all years. The high standard of teaching has a significant impact on pupils' achievement. Lessons are very challenging and teachers' expectations of pupils are high. Work is planned to suit all groups of pupils. In a Year 9 gymnastics lesson, lower attaining pupils made very good progress because the teacher modified tasks, simplified language and used demonstrations effectively. The learning of higher attaining pupils in the lesson was accelerated by extension tasks and grouping. Teachers provide very good opportunities for pupils to learn independently. In a Year 11 health related fitness lesson, pupils planned training programmes, evaluated performance and summarized results. The very good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning. The subject contributes well to the improvement of pupils' numeracy, literacy and ICT skills. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes, high participation rates and good relationships.
104. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader has a very strong commitment to improvement and success and is ably supported by a dedicated team of specialists. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and pupils' standards. Assessment systems are good overall, but there are some inconsistencies in the use of data when determining standards at the end of Year 9. Some aspects of accommodation are unsatisfactory and reduce standards and opportunity and thus limit the impact of the very good teaching. Teachers work hard to minimize the effects of an outdated gymnasium, the limited grass pitch area and the lack of a subject specific teaching base for examination theory work. The school is currently making a grant application for a much needed Astroturf pitch. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

## BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies is taught to GCSE in Years 10 and 11. Some pupils attend 'taster' courses in vocational subjects such as motor vehicle studies and beauty care, based at Stroud College. These subjects were not inspected on this occasion.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for citizenship is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has fully implemented the requirement of National Curriculum citizenship.

- Teaching is good and pupils make good progress.
- Leadership and management are very good.

## **Commentary**

105. Standards in citizenship are above average in Year 9 and average in Year 11. From discussion with pupils, scrutiny of written work and lesson observations, pupils have good levels of knowledge about becoming informed citizens and that their skills of enquiry and communication are good. They achieve well because citizenship is taught as part of personal, social and health education and tutor and assembly times. It is also taught through identified host subjects. Elements of citizenship that support learning and assessment in host subjects are clearly identified as such to pupils both orally and in their written work. For example in a Year 9 lesson in geography on flooding, elements of citizenship were highlighted for pupils as they explored the many paid and unpaid organisations that exist to help in times of emergencies or disasters. In a Year 11 religious education lesson elements of citizenship were promoted in discussion on the role of charities in relieving poverty, especially in the developing world.
106. Overall teaching and learning are good. Citizenship is effectively highlighted in lessons across a broad range of subjects, and together with the use of assemblies and themed days successfully widens pupils' experiences of citizenship activities. Pupils show interest in what they are doing and are prepared to work hard and take an active part in what they are doing. Lower attaining pupils are well supported and are active participants. The marking of pupils' work is regular and citizenship work is clearly identified as such. Pupils complete a self evaluation form on citizenship in both Years 9 and 11 and citizenship is reported in tutor reports and within individual host subjects.
107. Leadership and management are both very good. The curriculum manager has a clear vision of what still needs to be done and significant progress has been made in a relatively short space of time in this new subject area. The curriculum, particularly in Years 7 to 9, has been carefully mapped out with citizenship teaching opportunities identified across the school in assemblies, tutor periods and most effectively in host subjects. Coverage of citizenship is less effective in Years 10 and 11 due to time constraints and the fact that fewer subjects are taught to all pupils. Coordination of citizenship assessments across subjects is insufficiently developed.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	per cent gaining grades A-E		per cent gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	7	100	80.1	14.3	23.7	28.6	29.9
Biology	4	75	65.2	25	11.1	22.5	20.6
Business Studies	2	100	76.4	0	16.3	35	26.2
Chemistry	6	100	72.7	50	13.9	40	24.1
Communication Studies	1	100	86.4	0	23.8	40	32
Drama	8	100	86.5	25	19.6	37.5	30.6
Economics	6	83.3	73.6	16.7	20.1	25	26.4
English Language	5	100	82.9	20	17.5	36	28.7
English Literature	2	100	85.9	50	19.1	50	30.2
French	4	75	78.2	75	18.9	37.5	27.6
General Studies	8	100	73.9	62.5	17.8	50	25.7
Geography	4	100	74.3	0	19.8	27.5	26.5
History	5	100	80.7	0	19.5	30	28.6
Information Technology	11	54.5	67	9.1	10.9	20.9	21.4
Mathematics	11	90.9	61.9	9.1	17.1	25.5	22.1
Other Social Studies	13	100	69.7	23.1	16.7	34.6	24.1
Physics	1	100	68.6	0	14.4	30	22.7
Sociology	3	100	71.8	33.3	18.4	40	25.4
Spanish	2	100	78.5	50	17.7	35	27.3
Sports / PE Studies	2	100	73.2	50	11.4	45	23.1



**Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses**

Subject	Number entered	per cent gaining grades A-E		per cent gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	13	100	98.6	23.1	50.2	73.8	87.5
Biology	14	100	96.4	35.7	39.2	75.7	78.6
Business Studies	19	100	98.7	36.8	36.8	81.1	80.1
Chemistry	11	100	97.6	63.6	49	92.7	84.9
Communication Studies	2	100	99.4	50	37.8	80	82.1
Drama	16	100	99.5	37.5	40.1	86.3	83.6
Economics	6	100	98.9	33.3	52	76.7	88.3
English Language	5	100	99.4	60	36.3	88	80.9
English Literature	5	100	99.5	40	46.5	88	86.5
French	5	100	98.8	80	51.5	104	87.6
Design and Technology	8	100	97.8	25	35	75	77.9
General Studies	7	100	94.7	57.1	31	91.4	73.1
Geography	5	100	98.7	40	44.5	96	84
History	31	100	99	51.6	44.6	89	84.6
Information Technology	10	100	95.6	40	24.6	84	69.5
Mathematics	23	95.7	96.7	60.9	55.6	90.4	88.8
Music	1	100	98.8	0	38.9	60	81.1
Other Social Studies	34	100	97.4	32.4	42.7	83.5	81.8
Physics	23	100	96.7	34.8	44.6	74.8	81.7
Sociology	13	100	98.2	46.2	44.3	81.5	83.6
Spanish	5	100	98.3	20	50.2	84	86.9
Sports / PE Studies	8	100	98	37.5	30.9	82.5	75.2
Business VCE	15	93.3	65	0	14.6	54.7	60.1
Health and Social Care	11	100	67.7	27.3	14.5	67.3	63.5

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English, French, Spanish and German are offered in the sixth form. Spanish and German were not inspected on this occasion. English and French were inspected in detail.

### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 13.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and teaching experience that promotes a very good quality of learning.
- Students' attitudes are very good in both Years 12 and 13.
- The subject is exceptionally well managed to ensure the best possible results for students.
- Although students have secure computer skills, computers are not available in classrooms.

### Commentary

108. Students are entered for both the A-level literature, and also the language and literature examinations. In 2003 standards were well above average in the language course with 60 per cent per cent of students being awarded an A or B grade. In the literature course attainment was above the national average with 40 per cent per cent of students reaching A or B grades. In both courses all students passed, although only five candidates were entered. Overall male and female achievement was similar but male students did particularly well on the language course. In 2004 standards were similar although more students took the language course. All students passed, with many reaching the higher grades. The students who took the Advanced Extension Awards received either distinctions or merits. The overall trend is above the national average and this has continued in the AS results of the present Year 13.

109. Standards in Year 13, as seen in class and in written work, are above average and most students have continued into the second year, although their attainment on entry to the course was below average. The number of students taking advanced English courses has increased in the last two years. In both courses the present Year 12 has many higher attaining students but overall standards are average on entry. Achievement is very good in relation to results in previous tests or examinations because of the very good quality of teaching and the very good attitudes and response of students. Learning is very good. Most students work very hard, contribute well in class and prepare well for lessons. There are more female than male students but there is no evidence of difference in attainment or achievement. Higher attaining students are clearly reaching their full potential in the subject.

110. In a very effective Year 13 lesson focusing on forms of address in 'Much Ado About Nothing', students showed a clear appreciation of the subtleties of language used. Issues in the text were explored very well because of the effective questioning and care in planning, particularly in the identification of unfamiliar language and references. Excellent Year 12 work on 'The Handmaid's Tale' illustrated the ability of

students to work independently and their willingness to read other novels with similar themes. Students use websites for research and they use computers for written work but there are no computers specifically available for their use in the classrooms or in the library.

111. The teaching in the lessons observed showed excellent subject knowledge and experience in teaching at this higher level, used to ensure really effective learning in the classroom. Teachers encourage discussion, group work and the sharing of ideas and students take a leading role in lessons because they prepare work in advance.
112. Leadership is excellent. Students value the high quality of advice and guidance. Assessment information is readily available, as are detailed schemes of work. There is an emphasis on monitoring, review and development. Excellent leadership ensures that high standards are promoted by very good teaching and student-centred independent learning. There has clearly been a very good level of improvement since the last inspection.

## French

Provision in French is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in both AS and A-level GCE examinations.
- Students speak a lot of French and develop good levels of fluency and confidence.
- Very good teaching coupled with thorough coverage of the syllabus leads to very good examination results.
- Students complement this by working hard in lessons and doing a lot of homework.

## Commentary

113. In the 2003 GCE A-level examinations results were well above the national average and the proportion of students gaining the higher A and B grades was very high. At AS level, results were also above average. In 2004, the A-level results were similar to national averages but well above in the AS level. Students normally reach and sometimes exceed their target grades, based on the nationally used ALIS system. Taken together with the well above average standards seen during the inspection, this means that students are achieving very well in relation to their GCSE performances.
114. Students' speaking skills are developed very well. They are given lots of opportunities to speak French and to participate in lessons in a lively way with a good degree of confidence. For example, Year 12 students made presentations on the topic of "healthy lifestyles" and then asked each other questions, with little need for intervention from the teacher. Year 13 students routinely speak in French for the whole lesson, both with the teacher and with each other, making for a very good atmosphere. In one lesson, students debated the pros and cons of developing public transport systems in Strasbourg, arguing from the perspectives of different stakeholders. This lively debate lasted about 20 minutes and was conducted without any prompting at all by the teacher. Standards of speaking and listening were very good.

115. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use only French in the classroom and have very good language skills themselves. They are experienced and have a very clear understanding of what students need to do to succeed in the subject and they organise a comprehensive programme of study. At the same time they are careful to structure lessons in such a way that there are plenty of opportunities for students to use the language for themselves and to learn in a practical way.
116. Students are expected to work hard on this course and their folders are proof of this. Year 12 students had done a great deal of work since the start of the course in September, including grammar, vocabulary, reading exercises and examination style questions. Year 13 students who were interviewed said that they did a lot of homework, but understood that this was needed to get good grades. Year 13 students' folders show very good coverage of the examination requirements, including detailed notes on grammar topics and a good standard of extended written work.
117. This course is led and managed well by an experienced team of teachers. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in the proportion of students reaching the higher grades in examinations.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Relationships between the teachers and the students are very good.
- Procedures for assessment are very good.
- ICT is underused as a resource for teaching and learning.
- Opportunities for students to be involved in their own learning are not common.

### **Commentary**

118. In 2003, GCE AS-level results were above the national average. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades however was below national figures. Almost all students entered for the examination achieved a pass grade or better. In 2004, GCE AS-level results were an improvement on the previous year with an increasing number of students completing the course and achieving a pass grade or better. Standards seen during the inspection are above average and students are achieving well. Year 12 students are well into their new courses, making good use of their previous GCSE work to move into new areas of learning. For example, students in a mechanics lesson made good use of the sine and cosine rules when combining forces to find both the direction and magnitude of the resultant force by means of a vector triangle.
119. Standards in the 2003 GCE A-level examination are above the national average. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades was also above the national figures. In 2004, GCE A-level results continue to improve with over a third of those entered achieving the highest grades and almost all students entered for the examination achieving a pass grade or better. Current standards of students' work seen in Year 13 are above average and they are achieving well. Year 13 student files are well organised with much work included and provide a good

record for review and revision. Students recall knowledge well and apply it confidently in lessons and in their written work. For example, students in a pure mathematics lesson reviewed the rules of integration by substitution, by parts and by separating the variables as preparation for its application to practical situations. The use of the interactive whiteboard with animated examples contributed to a brisk pace and improved student confidence.

120. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to very good effect. Lessons are planned well and new concepts are explained in detail, based initially on a common understanding of the students. There is a very good balance between theory and practice and the students work hard as a result. Very good relationships exist between the students themselves and with the teachers. Work is intellectually challenging, deepening understanding and often requiring some speculation by the students. The ongoing monitoring of students' understanding in lessons needs to be more robust to be effective. However, teaching would be even better if student learning was less dependent on the teacher, with more collaborative opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding, particularly with the aid of ICT where student expertise is not exploited sufficiently. Homework is set regularly, although teacher annotation on work is not related to standards and student targets. Opportunities for independent learning, research and pre-reading before lessons are not common.
121. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Issues raised at the time of the last report have been addressed and standards are improving. There is a range of appropriate courses which meet every student's needs on entering the sixth form, in particular those of higher attaining students. Procedures for assessment are good. There is team of subject specialist teachers committed to raising standards. Teachers are approachable and prepared to give up their time outside lessons to support the students, which is appreciated. Resources that are available are used well though ICT is not exploited sufficiently by the students. Accommodation is adequate.

## SCIENCE

A-level and AS-level courses in biology were inspected in depth and those in human biology, physics, chemistry and geology were sampled; the courses in human biology and geology are new in 2004. In 2004 physics and chemistry A-level results were well above average and in both subjects students did significantly better than was predicted using GCSE performance. Results in physics have improved considerably in the last three years. Teaching in the sampled lessons in **chemistry**, **physics** and **geology** was very good, and in these subjects students achieve well. In **human biology** teaching and students' achievements are satisfactory and in all subjects the retention rate is excellent. Science specialist status has significantly enhanced the learning opportunities for sixth form students.

### Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are good and students work hard and behave well.

- Sometimes opportunities for students to work independently are missed.
- Teachers provide good support in the form of extra classes.

## Commentary

122. A-level examination results vary. They were about average in 2003 and were well above average in 2002. Since then they have declined but the majority of students gain their predicted grades and their achievements are satisfactory. A small number of students underachieve because they do not gain their expected grades. Few students choose to have an AS award because they continue to A-level, consequently comparisons with national results are not possible.
123. Students' achievements in lessons are satisfactory, and the standard of work seen is average. The work is usually suitably demanding and sometimes very demanding but the pace at which the work is done is only satisfactory. Achievement for some is good when they understand their tasks but for others it is satisfactory because they learn less. Boys and girls do equally well.
124. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory; some is good but most is satisfactory. In all lessons relationships are good, students are regularly encouraged but most do not have the confidence to ask questions. Opportunities for students to work independently are provided but their success is limited because teachers do not always provide clear instructions and students are uncertain about what they need to do. Uncertainty leads to reticence and slows learning. Sometimes opportunities for students to contribute through group research or presentation are missed. Good use is made of demanding computer software that challenges students' understanding and allows them to investigate scientific ideas for themselves. However teachers do not ensure that all students have enough understanding of these ideas before they start and learning by some lower attaining students is unsatisfactory. More able students learn satisfactorily. When teaching is good, instructions are clear, students know what to do and they carry out practical tasks confidently, quickly and carefully. Some classes are so small that the range of strategies used by teachers is limited and learning is hindered.
125. Leadership and management are satisfactory, records of students' progress are good and targets are set. Extra classes are provided for students who need them but the work of some students is poorly organised and incomplete and some do less well than expected in tests. There is no systematic intervention to supervise and help these students to develop the learning skills that A-level courses require. ICT, introduced recently as a result of gaining science college status, is used often; it interests students and improves learning but methods of raising standards and improving teaching are not included in specific detail in development plans.
126. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Boys and girls now do equally well and resources for ICT are very much better. Learning logs have been introduced and extra classes are available to support those who have difficulties. Students with low GCSE grades are still accepted onto courses.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the A-level course in 2003 were well above average.
- Teachers prepare a good range of learning resources to underpin learning.
- Very good relationships provide very good conditions for learning.

### Commentary

127. The A-level results in 2003 were well above average although they were lower in 2004. Standards seen during the inspection are above average and this is reflected in the most recent A-level results. Students start the course with broadly average standards, and achievement is good by the end of the course. Students gain good knowledge of the specialist software before they attempt the necessary coursework. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson where the teacher prepared the students well with basic programming skills which were covered initially at the very early stages of the course. Students are now able to draw well on these skills, which they apply well when doing their coursework. In lessons, they meet challenging and complex problems to solve. Students show above average skills of analysis of the task set by the examination board. They establish realistic parameters within the context of the task and develop a good range of information systems to meet the coursework criteria. They have a good understanding of the concepts involved in solving problems relating to information systems.
128. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are very well planned, and teachers are very well organised. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and students benefit in their learning from structured and very specific guidance and support which is very well matched to their needs of individuals. Teachers set very clear objectives in lessons to guide students and rigorously monitor their learning and progress. Teachers cover the knowledge in very good depth and explain the information well, which enables students to grasp the more difficult concepts. This improves their learning very well. Some students need further support in developing practical skills to clarify some aspects of linking their programming to the data sources they use. In the lessons seen, students were given very good support when teachers discussed specific points for development with individuals, which helps to consolidate students' own plans for their coursework. Most students have above average skills in numeracy and literacy and complete work to an appropriate level. In some lessons however, students are passive and there are fewer opportunities for them to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers establish very good relationships with students, which create a very good learning ethos in which there is mutual respect.
129. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The A-level course is now well established and there is a focus on raising standards further. There is a good level of co-ordination between staff and the expertise of teachers is well used. However, there are no girls on the AS and A-level courses, and there is a need to review how it is promoted and whether the current A-level course is appropriate for girls. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

130. Provision of ICT is good in other subjects, and standards are above average. Students can collect, analyse and handle information using a range of applications employed in other subjects, mainly to produce coursework projects. They use ICT selectively and appropriately in their 6<sup>th</sup> form subjects.

## HUMANITIES

In the humanities area psychology is the most popular A-level subject and was inspected in depth. A-level courses are also offered in geography, history, RE and sociology, which were not inspected on this occasion.

### Psychology

Provision for psychology is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The well-qualified staff have very good specialist subject knowledge, ensuring students respond accurately and confidently to the work set.
- Lesson planning is careful and well resourced, ensuring students sustain attention.
- There are good relationships between staff and students, resulting in a good level of motivation and progress.
- There is a lack of enrichment activities for students to appreciate the practical application of psychological theories.

### Commentary

131. Psychology is a popular subject in the sixth form, reflected in the high number of students enrolled on the course. However, the most recent results show attainment at A-level declined steeply, from over 90 per cent of students gaining grades A-C in 2000, to just over a third achieving these top three grades in 2004. Standards in examinations are currently average. The sharp decline in 2004 is mainly due to poor results for students' coursework, and staff changes over the previous four years. Swift action has been taken with the appointment of a new subject leader who is attending standardization meetings run by the examination board, and setting tighter internal deadlines for students to submit their coursework. There is also a greater emphasis on examination practice and technique. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed well in the subject but there are limited opportunities to develop ICT skills.

132. Much of the work seen on the AS and A-level courses reflects largely accurate answers to tests and assessments, indicating average standards and good achievement overall. At this early stage in the course, most AS students are reaching standards that would be expected given their prior attainment on entry to the course. Most A-level students are achieving well this term, and have improved on their original target grades. Higher attaining students are able to draw well on appropriate research to support their arguments. For example, in one Year 13 lesson, students could describe some of the evolutionary factors relating to the size of the brain, its efficiency and human intelligence. In another lesson, they were able to expand on the key concepts and explain various models relating to abnormality. A few are developing good writing styles, and make well-ordered, helpful notes containing accurate references to key concepts and theorists. These students use good strategies for revision, such as bullet points, using coloured highlighters, drawing diagrams and typing up their lesson notes up in an orderly and helpful fashion for revision. However, a number of students, who had low GCSE entry



grades, have some gaps and inaccuracies in their files, and struggle to write in a logical, coherent format. Too little of the work seen listed references at the end of completed essays or notes.

133. Relationships between the teachers and students are very good. Male and female students are equally motivated and focused in their studies. Most complete their homework as required and are meeting the deadlines set for their current work. Higher attaining students could cope with being further challenged through more suitable extension work.
134. The quality of teaching is good overall, and two lessons seen were very good. Teachers' secure knowledge of the subject and infectious enthusiasm engage students and help raise their confidence in lessons. Students appreciate the good, clear notes that are made on the board, with the best of these taking the form of key bullet points or spidergrams. Lesson planning is mostly systematic and teachers make good use of a range of interesting resources including quizzes, discussion tasks and mock examination questions, as well as conventional note-taking. Lessons are mostly conducted at a good pace with suitably timed activities. This keeps students alert and enables a good range of topics to be covered in depth. Teachers provide helpful feedback, teasing out answers and probing the students' knowledge to help them think more deeply about their arguments and draw on relevant research. This reflects the good progress that most students, particularly those in Year 13, are making. Homework is generally appropriate and builds on work carried out in the classroom, though students would benefit from relevant enrichment activities involving the local community. However, although deadlines for completion are clear, lower attaining students do not always get sufficient guidance on how much work needs to be completed or how long it is expected to take.
135. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The new subject leader has made a good start with analysing reasons for the recent decline in grades and the problems with coursework in the summer of 2004. This is the third change in leadership since the course was first successfully offered seven years ago. The current scheme of work is too fragmented, although there has been some very good practice developed by an established teacher. It is important that the best practice and resources are shared and consistently applied across all lessons to ensure the department can recover to its original high standard. Improvement since the previous inspection cannot be judged as the subject was new at that time and was not inspected.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Very high standards are attained in textiles.
- Very good teaching reflects very secure subject command, careful planning, and very high expectations and challenge.
- Students are keen to engage in design and make activities.
- Independent learning skills are weak in product design.
- Assessment is of a high quality, is thorough, and is well used to guide and support students.
- A lack of resources for computer-aided manufacturing restricts the work that can be done in this area.

### **Commentary**

136. Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment in design and technology. Retention rates between AS and A-level level are high. Unconfirmed results for 2004 reflect a dip in the usual high academic outcomes. Current work reflects a return to the well above average standards achieved in previous years. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed well in the subject but there are limited opportunities to develop ICT skills.
137. Standards of work seen during the inspection are very high in Year 12 textiles and are average in Year 13 product design. All students achieve well, and a significant proportion achieve better than their predicted grades. In lessons students are keen to apply design principles to a range of challenging design problems. In folder work students systematically analyse and evaluate their designs and product outcomes against modern trends and they demonstrate sensitivity to the needs and values of consumers. Standards of communication are very good in textiles and good in all other areas. Students make good use of the computer to research and present information. Students collaborate well in group work, show initiative and good independent learning skills in textiles but they are over-dependent on their teachers in other areas. Students in both years are well motivated, are engrossed in their work and take pride in final outcomes. Students are articulate and express their views well when presenting their research findings.
138. Teaching is very good. Work is thoughtfully planned and delivered with pace and challenge. Very good interaction between teachers and students is a feature in all lessons. Assessment practice is very good. Student progress is closely monitored and clear guidance is given to students on how they can improve their work. There is a lack of resources in both textiles and product design to facilitate work in higher order computer-aided manufacture.
139. Leadership is very good with a very clear vision for the direction and ethos of the subject, shared by all teaching staff. The subject area is managed very effectively and efficiently. Technical staff provide very good support but the allocation of support time is insufficient in textiles. Overall progress since the last inspection is satisfactory because the issues identified have been mostly resolved and standards have been maintained.

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

Art and drama are offered in this area and were inspected in depth. Music is also offered at A-level, but was not inspected. Sixth form students are involved in extra-curricular music activities, which are of a high standard.

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in sixth form examinations are well below average but have improved recently.

- Achievement is significantly compromised by poor accommodation, lack of resources and the perceived low status of the subject within the school.
- Teaching is good but these issues adversely affect learning.

## Commentary

140. Standards in sixth form examinations have declined very significantly and have been well below average in recent years. The majority of students fell well below the expectations predicted by their prior attainment. Last year these were mainly boys, who also under-achieved in their other subjects. Many were frequently absent and some were students whose art standards were below predictions based on other subjects. The department has responded to this decline by changing the Examination Board to one which does not require an in-depth, contextualised study in Year 12. This is a weak area of students' competence.
141. Standards on entry to Year 12 vary considerably, reflecting national trends. A few students have not taken GCSE art, but most have. Attainment is average, with good levels of practical skill in two- and three-dimensional work. Students are still weaker in the areas of creatively presented, personal investigations involving written research. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed in the subject but there are limited opportunities to develop ICT skills.
142. In Year 13, students have achieved better than in the recent past and standards are now average. Achievement against the criteria for the new examination is satisfactory. Students are on target this year to achieve their predictions. Any under-achievement is identified through the department's good assessment systems and discussion with students generally puts them back on track.
143. Significant hindrances exist preventing better achievement in the sixth form. Students have no studio where work and resources can be left out for access. This means that they unavoidably interrupt other lessons in order to work outside their lesson times. Students have to buy their own resources (except clay), because department funding is so low. They speak of their perception that the subject has low status within the school among staff and students. The department itself does all it can to overcome these barriers, often with the help of students themselves. Sixth formers have helped staff to redecorate the department, for instance, because unsatisfactory maintenance leads to deterioration, creating an unsatisfactory learning environment. Although some refurbishment has occurred, some rooms are still unsatisfactory. The condition of adjacent stairways and the department office is poor. These and other issues continue to compromise standards despite good management and tolerance by all concerned.
144. Teaching is good, with some very good teaching in lessons seen, but the issues above adversely affect learning. Relationships between staff and students are very good, with students valuing greatly the ways in which teachers overcome the constraints they face.
145. Leadership and management at department level are good. The strong teaching team tolerates difficulties very well, but the subject needs more investment at sixth form level. Standards are significantly lower than at the time of the last report, affected partly by the declining infrastructure of the department. Improvement is satisfactory.

## Drama

Provision for drama is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching results in students achieving better than expected results.
- The very good leadership of the department is committed to high standards.
- Extra-curricular drama activities are of high quality.
- Students show very good attitudes to drama in the school.

### **Commentary**

146. Standards in A-level examinations were in line with national expectations in 2003. This year's results show improvement particularly in the number of pupils achieving the highest grades. The vast majority of students for the past few years have all gained an A-C grade at A-level with little difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Students make better progress than might be expected from their GCSE grade predictions. Achievement in Years 12 to 13 is good and students make good progress in developing their drama skills. Evidence from lesson observations and a scrutiny of students' written work indicates that above average standards will be maintained by the current Year 13 group. The number of students opting for AS and A-level drama is very healthy, supporting two groups in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Retention rates in A-level drama are very good. Most students continue their studies from AS to A-level.

147. Overall, teaching and learning are very good in the sixth form. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and have high expectations of students. Teaching is challenging and inspiring, which helps students' interest and motivation. Relationships are excellent in lessons. Work is very well planned and there is pace and a range of different activities in lessons. Students respond very well in drama lessons and discuss their work, making perceptive comments on their own and others' work. In a Year 13 lesson, students showed very good knowledge and understanding of drama techniques and skills, developing their own scripts for their devised pieces. Topics chosen showed maturity and originality, ranging from a murder Cluedo game board play to a Punch and Judy interpretation of domestic violence. In each, the impact of the opening scene was effectively discussed and shared with and amongst students. In a Year 12 lesson, students explored status as a concept through a variety of different activities based around 'Our Country's Good'. Students explored the idea of status between convicts and officers through improvisation on physical deportment of high and low status, different work-based activities, and status as explored through whole class improvisation using a debate on smoking. Many of these activities mirrored Max Stafford Clark's own preparations for staging the play. A strength of students' work throughout the department is the use of drama logbooks where students' work is documented effectively from its inception to fruition, showing clearly the refinement and good progress through time. Literacy and ICT skills are well supported through students' project work.

148. Leadership is very good. The head of department shows enthusiasm and commitment to her subject, giving clear direction to her vision. Documentation is thorough with well planned schemes of work and policies. Priorities and targets for the department are well thought out with strengths and weaknesses clearly identified. The range of extra-curricular work is very good and students perform to high standards, often raising money for charity and performing for the community. Sixth form drama performances to younger pupils help raise the department's profile and status in the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been good as extra-curricular

standards have been maintained, and students continue to achieve well in drama through very good teaching. Drama continues to support students' social and cultural development very effectively.

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

### **Physical education**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good and meets students' individual needs very well.
- The subject leader has a very strong commitment to improvement and success.
- Teaching and learning in examination theory lessons lack the enhancement of a subject specific teaching base.
- The very good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all students to extend their learning.

### **Commentary**

149. The A-level results in 2003 were above the national average and represent good achievement from earlier attainment. The provisional results for 2004 are broadly average, in line with predicted grades and similar to their performance in other subjects. In the last three years, students have maintained a 100 percent pass rate in AS and A-level examinations.
150. Standards in work seen by Year 12 students and those in Year 13, who have continued with the A-level course, are average and show good improvement from their attainment on entry to the sixth form; most students are achieving well. Students have a sound grasp of the main concepts and theories and handle numerical data well. The extended writing skills of students are variable. They research work well and use appropriate technical language. Students use ICT well to enhance both their learning and presentation skills. Higher attaining students are successful in a wide range of sports at district, county and national levels.
151. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 12 and 13. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and are very aware of the different ways in which students learn and work hard to provide resources that meet their needs. In an A-level lesson, for example, students used the fitness suite to undertake a series of experiments looking at aerobic capacity. Tasks involved them in measuring, recording and analysing fitness test data. Students used heart rate monitors and had to summarise results in graphic form, by the use of ICT. A few students find the change to sixth form study difficult and initially, do not take sufficient responsibility for independent learning. Teachers give very good support and guidance by easing students into research and further reading. Teachers' expectations of students are high and they respond very positively. Students' written assignments are marked regularly and teachers' good diagnostic comments ensure that students know how to improve.

152. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The subject leader has a very strong commitment to improvement and success. Monitoring of achievement is very well established for individual students, for whom there is very good support. This reinforces the strong focus on raising standards. Teachers work hard to overcome the lack of a subject specific teaching base for examination theory work. The very good extra-curricular programme provides many opportunities for students to enhance their learning. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

## **BUSINESS**

Business and economics are offered in this area. One **economics** lesson in Year 13 was sampled. Students achieved very well because the lesson had been well planned. They were able to use computers to individually research global tourism during the lesson and report back to the rest of the group. Business studies at AVCE and AS and A-level was inspected in detail.

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards overall were below average in 2003 but improved in 2004.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and most have experience of business or industry that is used to enhance learning.
- ICT is used well by all students although they have limited access during lessons.
- The administration of courses is effective but there is a lack of clarity about the leadership and management of the subject.

### **Commentary**

153. Attainment in the GNVQ intermediate course in 2004 was above average in that all students reached at least a pass grade with one gaining a merit. This was a clear improvement on results in 2003. AVCE results in 2003 were below average but standards at A-level were well above the national average and this was a clear improvement on the previous year. In both AVCE and A-level results improved in 2004. Female students did well in 2003 and far more of them chose the AVCE course. There is no overall trend that shows difference in achievement. Students can enter for double or single awards at AVCE. The overall trend is for standards to be close to the national average, as they are in the present Years 12 and 13. This represents good achievement overall as standards on entry to courses are below or well below the national average.

154. Business courses are popular with students although more choose to take AVCE. Only one student is now taking the GNVQ course but several others have progressed successfully from GNVQ to AVCE. Retention is good and most students adapt well to the demands of a higher-level course, although some fail to attend lessons regularly. The use of available ICT resources is effective but some of the classrooms used do not have computers and some rooms provide an unsatisfactory learning environment.

Teachers are rarely able to model the high standards of presentations used in the business world because they lack the appropriate equipment.

155. Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and some are able to use recent experience in business to provide real examples. Learning is good because of the challenge and pace of work in lessons. Teachers are skilled at questioning; they assess understanding and encourage higher-level thinking, for example when helping students understand what is meant by price elasticity. The teaching of the finance unit is particularly effective. Student assignments indicate a sound grasp of business theory and a clear understanding of the examination board criteria because these aspects of the course are well taught.
156. Leadership and management are good. Two members of staff lead and administer the two business studies courses effectively. There is a programme of visits and visiting speakers and information about students' progress is easily accessible. Good support is available for recently appointed or newly qualified teachers. However there is some lack of clarity about the future development of the department and some inconsistency in line management. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory and the department has a good record of ensuring that students get at least a pass grade.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

Provision in health and social care is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is very good in health and social care AVCE, with results above predictions.
- Teaching and learning are very good, providing students with a good range of opportunities in lessons and from external experiences such as work placements.
- Students respond well to very good assessment and advice about how to improve work.
- Accommodation inadequacies are well managed to avoid adverse impact on achievement.

### **Commentary**

157. AVCE results have been average in recent years, with students exceeding predictions significantly in 2004. Achievement is very good. The current Year 12 is a very small group, currently working at the national average. These students are settling well to the expectations of a vocational course at this level and are achieving well. Year 13 is a larger group, also currently average in attainment. Attitudes on these courses are very positive indeed. Students show great determination to reach set targets, which most will achieve by the end of the year. Their achievement is very good. Assignments and completed units of coursework show students responding effectively to teachers' very good assessments and advice about how to boost work to match higher grade criteria. Students can explain their work well orally and enjoy working hard on this course, which prepares them well for their career aspirations.

158. Teaching and learning are very good. The two main teachers understand the subject and the requirements of vocational courses very well. The team includes appropriate specialists such as science staff to teach certain units. Good contacts with outside agencies mean that students have very effective input from visitors. They use visits to subject-related organisations well to contextualise their coursework. Students themselves arrange good work placements and integrate their experiences from these effectively into assignments. A significant strength of the department lies in the development of independent learning, with very effective individual mini-tutorials in lessons leading to students' secure understanding about what to do to improve work. They learn very effectively from practical experiences such as the "wheelchair challenge", which enables students to empathise well with the physically disabled. Many ICT applications are used well, for example in presentations and to communicate information in a Year 13 project about vaccination and immunisation.
159. The course is managed within the general Vocational area, which includes many different subjects. Students regard the two main teachers as the course leaders and this leadership is very good. Management of health and social care in the school also includes courses in Year 10 and 11, which provide a good progression route into the sixth form. When lessons occur in ICT suites, accommodation and resources available are satisfactory. Inadequacies in overall school accommodation adversely affect the quality of students' learning environment in other lessons. The department manages these difficulties well and all concerned tolerate the situation, avoiding adverse impact on achievement. There was no report on health and social care in the last inspection so improvement cannot be judged. Curriculum leadership is very good.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

160. The sixth form offers general studies at A-level. All students are also taught **personal, social and health education**, which includes sex and relationships education. This area was not inspected in detail but the quality of work seen was good, for instance an intelligent and mature discussion on the impact on a relationship of leaving the sixth form, with the partners pursuing different careers or higher education routes.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement	Sixth form grade	School grade
<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	4	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>		<b>2</b>
Attendance	4	3
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well pupils learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	6	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
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>3</b>
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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

