

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SHELDON SCHOOL**

Chippenham

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126499

Headteacher: Mr G MacMahon

Lead inspector: Mr I Hodgkinson

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> March 2005

Inspection number: 268907

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 students: 11 – 19  
Gender of students: Mixed  
Number on roll: 1,572

School address: Hardenhuish Lane  
Chippenham  
Wiltshire

Postcode: SN14 6HJ

Telephone number: (01249) 766 020  
Fax number: (01249) 766 030

Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of Mr K Pearce  
governors:  
Date of previous January 1999  
inspection:

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Sheldon is a large specialist science school on the north-western side of Chippenham. It is the largest school in Wiltshire. The number of students on roll has grown strongly since the last inspection, particularly in the sixth form, which is now somewhat larger than average. The school borders the other long-established town comprehensive school, Hardenhuish, and there is a good degree of co-operation between the schools in jointly providing post-16 courses to students.

The attainment of students when they join the school in Year 7 is in line with the national average. The socio-economic circumstances of students are on the whole better than average, and the proportion of those entitled to a free school meal is below average. However, as a large comprehensive serving the town and a wide rural catchment, the full range of abilities and a broad range of social and economic backgrounds are represented. The proportion of students whose first language is not English is low, and most of these are Nepalese who come from locally-based Gurkha Brigade families. One student of Brazilian origin is in the early stages of English acquisition. Over 93 per cent of the school's pupils are of White British heritage. Many other ethnic groups are represented in the school by small numbers of pupils.

The school has a unit for the hearing impaired on site, and its seven pupils are very much integrated into main school provision. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), and the proportion with statements of SEN, is below average. Of those requiring support beyond that provided solely by the school, most have moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. Nine have a hearing impairment (including the seven in the unit). Five have specific learning difficulties/dyslexia, three a speech or communication disorder, one a physical disability, and one has an autistic spectrum disorder.

The school's science college specialism has given rise to many new curricular and extra-curricular activities. A related priority is health and fitness, and the school has extensive sport and fitness programmes. The school attained the Healthy Schools Award and was re-awarded Sportsmark Gold in 2004. It also has Investors in People status and the Artsmark award. The school was identified in Ofsted's "roll of honour" as one of the relatively few schools to have been twice deemed particularly successful through inspection, in January 2005. It was a Beacon School from 2001 until the end of that designation in 2004.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20588	Mr I Hodgkinson	Lead inspector	
12775	Ms J Goodchild	Lay inspector	
12191	Mr C Moxley	Team inspector	English
4359	Ms W Hola	Team inspector	Mathematics
31688	Mr B McGonagle	Team inspector	Art and design
22985	Ms J Sparkes	Team inspector	Science Physics post-16
27351	Mr M Stanton	Team inspector	Design and technology
30978	Ms E White	Team inspector	Geography
15029	Mr K Davitte	Team inspector Co-ordinator, Post-16	History
18032	Ms I Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
16950	Ms C Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
23030	Ms C Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education
25377	Ms L Brown	Team inspector	Music Special Educational Needs
20719	Ms A Fraser	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship
5241	Dr C Millband	Team inspector	Biology post-16
30072	Mr J Skivington	Team inspector	Psychology
15277	Mr C Vidler	Team inspector	Business studies Work-related learning

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI  
1 - 4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

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 637 833) 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>4 - 7</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS</b>	<b>8 - 14</b>
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>14 - 25</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>25 - 28</b>
<b>Work-related learning</b>	<b>28 - 29</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>30</b>
	<b>- 60</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES 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>61</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Sheldon is a very good school**, with many outstanding features. The students achieve very well, because of the high quality of the education they receive. Students' personal development is excellent, because of the opportunities they are given to think carefully on a range of issues and to take responsibility. The school has high expectations of its students, and they acquire very good skills to help them learn very well. The school gives **very good value for money**.

**The school has very many strengths. Its main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- The school is very well led and managed at all levels, with outstanding strategic planning to reflect the school's ambition and goals.
- The quality of teaching is very good; students are taught skills that help them to learn independently and to express their views confidently on a range of topics.
- Students' progress is assessed and monitored very effectively, although there are some weaknesses in the monitoring of progress in citizenship and ICT.
- The quality of support and guidance for students' achievement and personal development is excellent.
- The school's programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is outstanding, and contributes much to the students' excellent personal development.
- Students are offered an extensive range of extra-curricular enrichment opportunities, and many participate in these programmes.
- Links with parents are mostly excellent, so that parents are able to play a full part in the education of their children.
- The school has excellent procedures in place to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety.
- Provision for physical education in the sixth form is excellent.
- The school's development as a science college has brought substantial benefits to the quality of education it provides.
- Curriculum arrangements for discrete lessons in ICT in Years 7 and 8 are unsatisfactory.

The school has made very good improvement since its last inspection in 1999. It has done very well to maintain the high standards identified during that inspection, and the quality of teaching and learning has strengthened considerably. There has been a very good improvement in the overall quality of assessment, which now supports learning very well in most subjects. Improvement in ICT has been generally good, given its low starting point: students now make satisfactory progress in ICT because they have good opportunities to use computers in many subjects, but there are weaknesses in curriculum arrangements in Years 7 & 8 where some classes have non-specialist teachers who lack the subject expertise to address all of their students' needs.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	B	A
Year 13	A/AS level examinations	A	B	A	

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.*

*For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

**Standards achieved overall are very good.** Students join the school with average levels of attainment, and leave with GCSE or A-level results which are usually well above average. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are also well above the national average in all subjects. All groups of students achieve very well, particularly the middle and higher attainers.

**Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent.** Their attitudes to learning are very good. Attendance, punctuality and behaviour are all very good. Students' personal development is excellent. Students develop an acute awareness of moral issues and debate them with maturity. They respond exceptionally well to the many opportunities they are given to take responsibility and show leadership.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching is very good,** and students learn very well because they are given the skills to learn independently and think critically. Teachers' expectations of students are particularly high, so that all are encouraged to do their best. Students with special educational needs, including those from the special unit for the hearing impaired, make very good progress overall and benefit from their high degree of integration into mainstream classes, but their learning slows when there is a lack of teaching assistant support in lessons with a high literacy content. The curriculum is good, and supported by very good extra-curricular programmes of enrichment, in which many participate. Students are exceptionally well cared for. There are extensive links with the community to support learning, and good links with other schools and colleges, especially local primary schools which help students make progress on joining the school in Year 7. Links with other schools and colleges to develop a wider curriculum for students aged 14-16 are not as well developed. Links with parents are excellent and support learning very well.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good** at every level, with a number of outstanding features. The headteacher's leadership is very good, and he has ensured that an excellent vision for the school's development is widely shared by all. The school's system for planning that development is outstanding, because it is firmly grounded in a clear analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses in every subject, and enables full participation of staff and governors in setting the school's priorities for improvement. Governance is very good: the grasp that governors have of the school's strengths and weaknesses and their involvement in shaping the direction of the school is outstanding. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met, with the exception of provision for a daily act of collective worship in the sixth form.

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

Students and parents on the whole have great admiration for the school and value its work: they rate the quality of teaching and school leadership very highly. There were very few overall concerns expressed prior to the inspection. Inspectors found that some concerns over teaching and behaviour in modern foreign languages have been addressed and provision is now good. Some negative responses by sixth formers over the quality of their

support and guidance into sixth form courses were not substantiated in discussions with inspectors, and the evidence suggests that such guidance is now exceptionally good.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve the organisation of the ICT curriculum in Years 7 and 8 to ensure that all classes learn well;
- improve arrangements to assess and monitor students' capability in citizenship and ICT;

**and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- meet requirements for a daily act of collective worship in the sixth form.

### THE SIXTH FORM AT SHELDON SCHOOL

A rapidly growing sixth form, now a little larger than average, offering a broad range of AS/A- levels and VCEs, some provided jointly with the adjacent sixth form of Hardenhuish.

## OVERALL EVALUATION

**The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is very good.** Its students achieve very well as a result of expert teaching which challenges students to think critically and articulate their ideas carefully. The sixth form is **very cost effective**, and its joint provision of courses with the neighbouring Hardenhuish further broadens choice and opportunities for students.

**The main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- Results at A-level are well above average.
- Teaching is very good overall, including high quality preparation for examinations.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Students' personal skills are nurtured and students make excellent contributions to the life of the school.
- The school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship in the sixth form.

## 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> Students achieve very well. Teaching and learning are very good. Current standards are well above average. A-level results were above average in each of the last two years.
Mathematics	<b>Good in mathematics.</b> Achievement is good and teaching and learning are also good. Standards in Year 13 are above average. A-level results in each of the last two years have been average.
Science	<b>Very good in biology</b> with students learning and achieving well in response to very good teaching. A-level results were well above average in 2004 and in 2003 were in the top five per cent of schools nationally.

	<p><b>Very good in physics.</b> Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve well. Current standards are well above average. A-level results were well above average in each of the last two years.</p> <p>One lesson in chemistry was sampled where students were achieving well. A-level results in chemistry were very high in 2004 and in the top five per cent of schools nationally.</p>
Humanities	<p><b>Good in history.</b> Students are achieving well and standards are above average in Year 13. Teaching and learning are good. A level results were above average in 2004.</p> <p><b>Very good in psychology.</b> A-level results in 2004 were average. Students who attained particularly good results in their AS levels when in Year 12 are now achieving very well at A-level to reach well above average standards. Teaching and learning are very good.</p> <p>Lessons in philosophy and ethics and geography were sampled. In philosophy and ethics, achievement, teaching and learning were very good. In geography, students were achieving well in response to very good teaching.</p>
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<p><b>Very good in design and technology.</b> Current standards are above average and students are achieving very well in food technology and product design. Teaching and learning are very good. A-level results were average in 2004 and well above average in 2003.</p>
Visual and performing arts and media	<p><b>Very good in art.</b> Achievement, teaching and learning are very good. Current standards in Year 13 are well above average. A-level results were well above average in each of the last two years.</p> <p>Lessons in music, drama and media studies were sampled. In one lesson seen in music, standards were above average and teaching, learning and student achievement were good. Standards were very high in drama and achievement excellent. In media studies, standards were above average overall and teaching and learning good.</p>
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<p><b>Excellent in physical education.</b> Achievement is very good as is teaching. Current standards in Year 13 are well above average. Results in the last two years at A-level have been well above average.</p>
Business	<p><b>Good in business studies.</b> Achievement is good and students learn well in response to good teaching. Current standards in Year 13 are above average. In the past two years A-level results have been well above average.</p> <p>Economics was sampled and standards were average and achievement satisfactory. A-level results were well below average in 2004 following average results in 2003.</p>
Health and social care	<p>In a very well taught Year 12 lesson sampled, students were achieving very well and attaining above-average standards.</p>
<p><i>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'.</i></p>	

## ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Advice, guidance and support are of high quality. Students are very well advised throughout their sixth form career and in their further progression. Some students who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that they had not received helpful advice on what to study in the sixth form. Evidence from the inspection did not confirm that and students were highly complimentary about the advice they had been given. Where students are not making sufficient effort, their work is monitored more carefully. Inclusion is excellent, including for students new to the school.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

**Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good** and have played a major part in expanding numbers and provision and integrating the sixth form more effectively within the life of the school. Governors provide high quality support. Shared provision in a limited range of subjects with the adjacent secondary school is well managed.

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

Students are very pleased with standards of teaching, the support they receive and how they are treated as responsible young adults. They appreciate the ready access to computers in their private study time. They enjoy their wider school responsibilities, the faith placed in them by the school and opportunities to show initiative. They feel that there is a good spirit in the sixth form which it is important to preserve with growing numbers.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

**Standards achieved overall are very good.** Students join the school with average levels of attainment, and leave with GCSE or A-level results which are usually well above average. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are also well above the national average in all subjects. All groups of students achieve very well, particularly the middle and higher attainers.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- National test and examination results are well above average at Years 9, 11 and 13.
- The school's high "value added" scores show that students make very good progress from the average results they get at the end of their primary school through to their well above average GCSE results.
- All groups of students, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well.
- Students in some discrete ICT classes in Years 7 and 8 do not achieve as well as they should.

#### Commentary

1. The overall attainment of students who join the school in Year 7, measured by national tests at the end of primary school and tests of students' cognitive ability in Year 7, is broadly in line with national average. There has been an almost continuous rise in standards on entry year-on-year, with the exception of the current Year 10. In Years 7 and 8 in particular, there has been a sizeable increase in the proportion of higher attaining pupils joining the school, to over a third in the current Year 7 compared to a fifth when the current Year 12 joined. There has in consequence been a fall in the proportion of lower attainers among the younger age groups.
2. National test results at the end of Year 9 have been well above the average for all schools for the last three years. This is mostly the case for all of the tested subjects of English, mathematics and science. Against schools who take students with a similar level of prior attainment, overall results have also been well above average, and in 2002 were very high (among the top five per cent). This is also mostly the case for individual tested subjects. The well-above average performance is due in part to the low proportions of pupils attaining below the expected Level 5; in all subjects, there is a relatively "short tail".

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.3 (36.5)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	38.1 (39.1)	n/a (35.4)
science	35.4 (36.5)	n/a (33.6)

*There were 276 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. Year 9 test results have risen broadly in line with the national trend over recent years. In 2003, English results improved dramatically after years of some decline, and 2004 English results were only a little down on the 2003 peak. In all subjects, results were somewhat down in 2004, reflecting to some extent the lower prior attainment of that group.

4. The progress students made from their national tests at the end of primary school to their results in tests at the end of Year 9 (their “value added” score) in 2003 was well above the average for all schools and for similar schools. Such data is not yet available for 2004. The school strongly exceeded its statutory targets for test results in all subjects in 2004, reflecting strong overall added value. There is no significant difference in performance of girls and boys in Year 9 tests: overall, both groups outperform their national counterparts by the same amount over time.
5. Currently, standards of attainment are well above average by the end of Year 9, and students’ achievement across Years 7-9 is very good. Standards are high and achievement very good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, along with music and physical education. Standards are above average and achievement is good in German, French, geography, history, religious education, and design and technology. Students also achieve well in art and design, where they achieve average standards by the end of Year 9, having started with skills which are below the levels expected. Students’ very good achievements in their subjects are supported by strong literacy and numeracy skills. Their skills in measurement and in drawing and interpreting charts are strong. They write very well, and in a variety of forms, so that there is, for example, exceptionally good extended writing by higher attainers in history, and very good annotation of work to show design development in design and technology. Students’ speaking and listening skills are particularly good: they are highly articulate, and their sensible and well-informed contributions to discussion and debate in all subjects helps refine their skills of critical evaluation.
6. Students’ ICT skills are less well developed. Overall, they now make satisfactory progress in ICT in Years 7-9, because they are given many good opportunities to apply ICT to enhance their work in many subjects, and therefore get a broader experience of the direct application of ICT skills than they would in most schools. However, in discrete ICT lessons, too many students in Years 7 and 8 do not achieve as well as they should, because, having been briefed at the start of a lesson by a specialist ICT teacher, some classes are then taught by non-specialist teachers who do not have the skills to respond to students’ problems or to develop and extend their ICT capabilities to higher levels. Teachers assess students’ capability in ICT by the end of Year 9 to have risen considerably over recent years and there is clearly much improvement since the last inspection, but the current organisation of discrete provision for the subject in Years 7 and 8 constrains achievement for many.
7. GCSE results in 2004 were above the average for all schools for those gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C. In terms of students’ performance in their best eight GCSE subjects, results were well above the national average. Over time, GCSE results have varied between above and well above national average for all schools. Compared with schools whose students attained similar results in Year 9 national tests, GCSE results in 2004 were well above average. Students’ progress from their Year 9 test scores to their GCSE results – their “value added” - was above the national average for all schools in 2004, but the value added from students’ tests at the end of primary school to their GCSE results was well above average, reflecting the strong progress over Years 7-9 as well as Years 10 and 11. Statutory GCSE targets were met and exceeded in 2004.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	65 (64)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (93)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	46.5 (45.1)	41.4 (40.6)

*There were 279 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

8. Improvements in GCSE results have not kept pace with the national trend because of a fall in boys' results since 2002: girls' results have risen strongly over time and in 2004 were the best ever. School data shows that the fall in boys' results is linked to a fall in their prior attainment, and analysis by the local education authority suggests that boys' results are mostly at least consistent with expectations based on Year 9 test results. School analysis of 2004 GCSE shows that in all subjects other than physical education, double science and graphics, girls performed better than boys in 2004 in relation to expectation, but inspectors found no significant differences in the achievement of girls and boys among current cohorts. The school monitors the performance of its pupils from ethnic minorities and this monitoring indicates generally very good progress in line with or exceeding predictions based on Year 9 test performance.
9. GCSE results in most subjects were above or well above the national average in 2004, with especially high attainment overall, including at grades A\*-A, in drama, English literature, physical education and religious education. Students did very well in these subjects in relation to their prior attainment, as they did in the applied GCSE in art and design, and in the design and technology graphics & resistant materials options. French results were average in 2004 and students overall underachieved, especially the boys. This underperformance was linked to much staff turbulence in the subject. Inspectors find that achievement currently is good in French in Years 10 and 11. ICT results in 2004 were poor for boys and girls, although inspection evidence shows that currently students' achievement in ICT is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and that they are working at nationally expected levels.
10. Currently, standards are well above average by Year 11 and students across Years 10 and 11 achieve very well. All groups of students achieve very well, and particularly the middle and higher attainers, who are constantly challenged to think critically about the material they are studying and who develop very good evaluative skills. Standards are very high and achievement very good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, music and physical education. In most other subjects, standards are above average and achievement is good. Very good achievement in Years 10 and 11 continues to be underpinned by students' strong literacy and numeracy skills, and their ability to think critically about a range of issues. Furthermore, students are very well prepared for examinations by expert teachers who offer students a good deal of structure in their approaches to learning, to coursework, and to revision. In ICT and citizenship, achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In ICT, students continue to enjoy many opportunities to use computers in a variety of applications in many subjects, but for the many who do not follow an accredited ICT course, their opportunities to develop their understanding of these applications to higher levels are limited. In citizenship across Years 7-11, students clearly develop as good citizens and develop their awareness of rights and responsibilities, but outside the very good teaching they receive in personal, social and religious education, they are not always made aware that they are learning about citizenship.
11. Students with special educational needs (SEN) achieve very well overall and benefit from being included in mainstream classes for almost all of their time. Students with hearing impairment also achieve very well overall, although they do not make as much progress where they lack direct individual support, especially in lessons with a higher literacy content. Students with greater hearing loss, either from a temporary cold or more progressive degeneration, especially need to be more closely supported in lessons which have a higher literacy content. Students with behavioural difficulties are managed well by teachers and support staff and achieve well. The relatively few students for whom English is an additional language, including one at an early stage in learning English, make very good progress in line with their peers.

### **Sixth form**

12. In 2004, results were well above average overall at A-level. In 1998, at the time of the last inspection, results exceeded the national average for the first time and since that time results

have improved further. The pattern has been one of consistent improvement. At A-level in 2004, there was only one student ungraded in a subject out of 243 subject entries and there have been very few in other years. Results at A-B grades were well above average in 2003 and above average in 2004.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.7 (95.4)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	43.7 (42.8)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	296.7 (295.1)	265.2 (258.2)

*There were 94 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

13. In 2004, A-level results were well above average in biology, physics, business studies, art and design, physical education and sociology. They were very high in chemistry and in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Results were above average in English, drama, history and French. Physics, art and design, physical education and business studies have been consistent in achieving well above average results in each of the last two years and results were very high in biology in 2003. Results have improved significantly in art and design since the below average results at the time of the last inspection.
14. In an overall very healthy picture at A-level, results in a few subjects are not quite as good as others in 2004 but nevertheless achieved average standards. Following well above average results in 2003, design and technology and geography declined to average in 2004. Other subjects with average results in 2004 were psychology and mathematics and the latter was also average in 2003. The most marked decline in 2004 were the results in economics which deteriorated from average in 2003 to well below average in 2004, caused by a very low percentage attaining A-B grades. AS results in economics in 2004 were also weaker than in most subjects.
15. Other than in business studies, small numbers are entered for vocational A-levels in information technology, leisure and recreation and travel and tourism, but in 2004 all were successful in attaining A-E grades. The latter two subjects are taught at the adjacent secondary school. In 2003, with greater numbers entered results were well above average in leisure and recreation and above average in travel and tourism.
16. Retention rates on AS and A-level courses are high and that, coupled with regular attendance, has significant effect on students' achievement.
17. Current standards are well above average overall with students achieving very well. In subjects which were the main focus for the inspection in the sixth form, standards are well above average in English, biology, physics, physical education, psychology and art and design, and achievement is very good. In mathematics, history, design and technology and business studies, standards are above average: in most of these subjects achievement is good and in design and technology it is very good. In psychology, the current well above average standards are better than the average results at A-level in 2004 because of a more able intake into Year 13. This was illustrated in their AS examinations when in Year 12 when 16 of the 39 candidates attained A grades. There were also some particularly good performances in art and design and physical education at AS level in 2004, all of which are being reflected in current standards in Year 13.
18. The very good grounding received in the lower school ensures that nearly all in the sixth form write well and that they have the numerical and ICT skills to cope well with their courses. They seize on opportunities to develop their ICT skills further, as seen with their quickly acquired expertise in using interactive technology and PowerPoint presentations.

## STUDENTS ATTITUDES', VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

The attitudes, behaviour, attendance and punctuality of students are all very good. The personal development of students is excellent.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The attitudes of the majority of students towards their learning are very good and sometimes excellent.
- Students respond to the high expectations and challenge of teachers and many achieve higher grades in GCSE than predicted.
- The behaviour of the majority of students is very good.
- Attendance is well above the national average for all schools.
- Very good working partnerships have been established between students and staff.
- Students' personal development is excellent and supported well by the number of opportunities to accept responsibility within the school community.
- There are no significant weaknesses in this aspect.

### COMMENTARY

19. The attitudes of students towards their learning are very good and sometimes excellent. Students are highly motivated to learn, enjoy their studies and many achieve above their predicted grades in external examinations. They respond well to the high expectations of teachers. Very good working partnerships have been established between staff and students based on mutual respect. Staff are very good role models for students. Students support each other in their learning and listen with interest to views of their peers that differ from their own. Students are able to form logical, coherent arguments to support their opinions and their ability to listen to views different from their own keeps their thinking flexible. They are able to work independently when required, take responsibility for their learning and need little in the way of supervision by adults.
20. Attendance is well above the national average for all schools and is very good. Punctuality to school and lessons is very good.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.2	School data	0.3
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

21. The behaviour of students is very good. Outside lessons, students are well behaved and courteous towards each other. Some students in Years 7 to 9, when interviewed, expressed concern about incidents of disruption in some lessons, particularly modern foreign languages. Inspectors found that the school had successfully addressed this issue, caused by absence of permanent staff. There are a small number of students with challenging behaviour. The inclusion team works well with these students in conjunction with external agencies. The school promotes the rights of all students to learn. Bullying and racism are not major issues of concern for most students in this school. Procedures to manage incidents are in place and students feel confident to approach staff knowing that incidents will be dealt with effectively. Fixed-term exclusion is reserved for those students who fail to conform to other measures the school employs. Students are fully supported on their return to school and it is rare for them to be excluded a second time.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of students*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1438	80	1
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	29	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	19	2	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	6	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	12	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	6	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Chinese	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	40	0	0

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

22. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is excellent and is the foundation for the very good attitudes and excellent personal development of students. Spiritual development is very good. The religious education syllabus, and teaching, provides very good opportunities for the spiritual development of students; English, music and art also make a significant contribution, as do the spiritual acts of reflection in form periods. The moral and social development of students is excellent. Students are encouraged to look at a range of moral and ethical issues and form their own opinions. Thought-provoking questions such as 'When does life begin?' were posed during a lesson on the consequences of teenage pregnancy and abortion; students' responses were mature and well-informed. Students are encouraged to develop an understanding of the effect of their actions on others. They are encouraged to think of themselves as responsible global citizens. Fund raising for a range of charities, including a school in Kenya and their response to the recent Tsunami crisis, demonstrate their concern for others in the global community. Students are encouraged to become environmentally aware. They run a paper recycling system in the school. They also volunteered to work with the Conservation Trust and planted an avenue of lime trees on the school drive. Students' cultural development is very good. A range of visits both in this country and overseas supports this aspect of their education. Subjects such as religious education, art and English have a well-planned element of multicultural education and help students to understand more about cultural diversity in British society.
23. The values and attitudes of the students with SEN in the school and in the HI unit are very good and are in line with those of other groups of students within the school. The school sets an example of caring for each individual. Students are encouraged to take initiatives such as when a pupil with Down's Syndrome hosted a Down's Syndrome support group meeting at the school or when a Year 8 pupil with knowledge of signing, took a central role in teaching post-16 students at a Signing Club. Students with behavioural difficulties are encouraged to take

responsibility for their actions. They learn to manage their frustrations and withdraw to the SEN base rather than have a confrontation in class.

## **Sixth form**

24. Attendance in lessons is very good. Students in Year 12 are required by the school rules to attend the school full time and that is observed. In Year 13, students can negotiate up to three double lessons for home study. Punctuality for lessons is also generally very good. The great majority of students are ready to work hard on their studies but there are very small numbers who are not as fully committed as they could be and whose progress is therefore monitored closely. Behaviour and attitudes are very good. Discussions between students show an independence of thought coupled with a healthy respect for others' views. Their spiritual development is good and their moral, social and cultural development very good. They are prepared to reflect on issues covered in their very good general studies programme, in their formal lessons, in discussion groups in tutorials and following assemblies. Students get on well with one another and the mixture of Year 12 and 13 students in tutorial groups helps social integration and works very well.
25. Much priority has been given by school and head of sixth form to involve sixth formers more in the life of the school and for their presence and voice to be more in evidence. The school considered it was doing much to cultivate pupils' personal development and sense of responsibility in Years 7 to 11 but little after that, which it considered was illogical. That situation has been changed with most students very willing participants in the process and benefiting considerably from the experience. When interviewed, students said they enjoy their wider school responsibilities, the faith placed in them by the school and opportunities to show initiative. Students are very good ambassadors for the school, for example, when helping at school events such as awards evenings and parents' evenings and when conducting introductory tours of the school for prospective pupils and their parents. Proof of that was seen in the expert way that students conducted a guided tour of the school for inspectors on the pre-inspection visit. The school is very proud of its sixth-formers whom they view as outstanding role models in the school and inspectors support that judgement.
26. The school sees opportunities offered outside the formal curriculum as an important part of students' personal development and a preparation for life. Most students are enterprising and willing to take responsibility but some prefer to confine their activities within the sixth form and to their studies, a right which the school respects. At least 60 per cent of students, however, make a regular and outstanding contribution to the wider life of the school. The complete list of activities is too extensive to quote but major contributions are made by students in helping in classes in the lower school, to the peer mentoring programmes and to extra-curricular clubs. In the local community, there are numerous examples of students being ready participants in helping with charity work and in the school's liaison work with primary schools. Some students with particular interests have shown initiative by setting up their own lunchtime activities, and in particular in music. Students have also shown enterprise in raising funds through 'fun' activities such as a 'pop idol' competition. When new ideas are put forward, the response is very positive, for example, to the Millennium Volunteers programme and to the creation of a sixth form prefect system. Already, over 50 prefects are making a significant contribution and there are 76 applications from Year 12 students to be prefects next year. Students on the social committee, too, make a very good contribution. All this contributes very positively to developing responsible leadership and confidence and self-esteem.

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

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching is very good, and students learn very well because they are given the skills to learn independently and think critically. The curriculum is good, and supported by very good extra-curricular programmes of enrichment, in which many participate. Students are exceptionally well cared for. There are extensive links with the community to support learning, and good links with other schools and colleges, especially local primary schools which help students make progress

on joining the school in Year 7. Links with other schools and colleges to develop a wider curriculum for students aged 14-16 are not as well developed. Links with parents are excellent and support learning very well.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching is very good, and students learn very well. The quality of assessment is very good.

## MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teachers' expectations of students are particularly high, so that all students are encouraged to do their best.
- Students are given the skills to learn independently and think critically, so that they develop breadth and depth in their knowledge and understanding and are able to show clear reasoning in their answers.
- Students' learning is enhanced by their ability to listen and speak very well and to write very well to suit a variety of purposes. Their number skills are also very good.
- The deployment of non-specialist teachers to classes in ICT in Years 7 and 8 too often leads to unsatisfactory teaching and learning.
- Teachers make highly effective use of assessment to inform their planning and target-setting. Most students know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve the standard of their work.
- The assessment of students' progress in citizenship is unsatisfactory, and there is not enough monitoring of the ICT capability of those not taking an accredited course in ICT in Years 10 and 11.

## Commentary

27. The quality of teaching and learning is high across the school. During the inspection, getting on for half of lessons seen were very good or excellent. Teaching and learning are very good overall in English, mathematics, science, religious education, design and technology, music, and physical education. In most other subjects, teaching and learning are good. In citizenship, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but very good in the citizenship elements of the personal, social and religious education programme. Teaching and learning quality is high across Years 7-9 and Years 10-11; it is highest overall in Years 7 and 11. In Year 11 lessons seen, students observed were being particularly well prepared for their GCSE examinations.

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 190 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
16 (8%)	72 (38%)	77 (41%)	19 (10%)	6 (3%)	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.*

28. There are many strengths in the quality of teaching across subjects. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and expertise establishes high expectations for all groups of students. Higher attaining sets of students respond especially positively to the challenges put before them, and teachers' skilful management of lower attaining and broad ability groups also encourages very good progress. Teachers use very skilful questioning to develop students' understanding and their ability to think critically on a range of issues. Students listen well and offer very good, considered responses using subject-specific vocabulary.
29. Students are very well supported in developing the skills to learn independently. They are set tasks by teachers which develop their skills of enquiry by encouraging them to use information from a range of sources, including ICT. Students are highly articulate in sharing their ideas in

large and small groups; they are offered many opportunities to work collaboratively in problem-solving activities. Most subjects, including, for example, design and technology and history, offer students very good support and guidance in developing writing skills which allow students to show the clear rationale underlying their ideas. Students' number skills are very good. Teachers have been very well supported in developing opportunities for students to improve the accuracy of their work through more precise application of number. Students' skills in measurement and in drawing and interpreting charts and graphs are particularly strong and put to very good use in subjects such as science and design and technology. Students are given many opportunities to use ICT, not only to access or present information, but also to carry out measurement, modelling, design and making tasks in many subjects including mathematics, science, design and technology, art and design, geography, music and physical education.

30. A very small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching and learning was seen and included instances where, untypically, lessons were not adapted sufficiently well to allow all students to participate fully so that some became disengaged, or, again untypically, where expectations of standards or behaviour were not high enough. In ICT, lessons were unsatisfactory in Years 7 and 8 where classes were taught by non-specialist teachers who could not help students to solve problems or improve their capability in using ICT.
31. The teaching and learning of students with SEN and with hearing impairment, who are integrated into mainstream classes, is very good overall and in line with those of others in their class. Teachers take responsibility for the students in their classes and structure their lessons to take account of individual needs. Students respond very well to those teachers who demand high standards and who set appropriate and challenging work which engages their interest through imaginative presentation. Teaching is less effective when expectations are too low or too high to match the ability of the students and where there are insufficient teaching assistants to mediate and support students with a variety of learning or behavioural difficulties. In such classes, students find it difficult to understand the work and lose focus. Students in discrete sets for lower attainers have a good attitude to their work but find difficulty where levels of literacy are very low. Although these students have opportunities to read to a teaching assistant, there is no structured reading programme (identified as an area for improvement in the last inspection) and little use is made of information technology to help the students to engage with words through visual images. The teaching of students with dyslexia (specific learning difficulties) by specialist teachers is very good, and deploys very good specialised resources designed for students with dyslexia by the Bristol Dyslexia Centre, along with very good use of ICT.
32. The teaching and learning of students with hearing impairment through withdrawal groups with specialist teachers and qualified support assistants is very good. In these lessons, students make very rapid progress as their level of need is understood and strategies devised to enable them to learn. Students are encouraged to speak and develop arguments, to explain at length and they develop confidence rapidly. The teaching and learning of students with hearing impairment in mainstream classes is generally very good. Class teachers use the Soundfield system well to ensure that students can always hear as well as possible and do not give explanations while they turn away to work on the board, using instead the interactive whiteboards and information technology. Teaching and learning is good or very good where students have teaching assistant support, more usually in language-based lessons. Teaching assistants often help students by taking notes or emphasising particular points or explaining concepts which can otherwise be lost to a hearing impaired child. In lessons where language has a greater importance, hearing impaired students without additional teaching assistant support learn satisfactorily but do not always keep pace with the lesson. They do not always understand the finer points of the topic and do not always know what they are missing.
33. The school's system of assessment acknowledges the central role that assessment plays in the process of education. It has been designed to help students recognise their own strengths and weakness and set their own targets for improvement. Faculty leaders play a key role in ensuring that departments constantly monitor progress and set achievable targets for those

students who are failing to achieve their full potential. They have responsibility for ensuring that the faculty marking policy complies with the whole-school policy and for ensuring that appropriate recording systems are in place. Schemes of work incorporate assessment criteria and are written in such a way that students can understand the criteria against which their work will be assessed.

34. Throughout the school, most departments make very effective use of assessment data. Assessment is carried out thoroughly and constructively in most subjects. There is an excellent balance between encouraging students and challenging them to do even better. Formal and informal assessments are both very good. Marking is thorough and clear indicators given as to what students must do to improve. In psychology, English and science, for example, annotation of students' work is very detailed and extensive. In science, marking is very good and is carried out according to whole-school policy, but tailored to meet the needs of the science curriculum. In modern foreign languages, there is some inconsistency in the amount of written work set and the quality of marking between teachers.
35. In most subjects, assessment is used to inform and improve teaching and learning. However, in ICT, the work belonging to students who have not opted for an accredited course in the subject is not assessed adequately; therefore, they do not know how to improve the standard of their work. Similarly, the citizenship work students undertake in other subjects is not always identified to students as citizenship, or assessed as citizenship, so that students' progress in developing the skills, knowledge and understanding of citizenship cannot be fully monitored. These are the exceptions, however, and assessment is very good in all other subjects. The assessment of reading and spelling for students with SEN is carried out regularly at half-yearly intervals. Such regular assessment helps in the tracking of progress, although targets set for students' improvement are not as precise and measurable as they might be to help the subject teachers to provide direct individual help or to show in the annual review the exact degree of progress which has been made.

### **Sixth form**

36. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good overall and there are notable examples of excellence. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen, and all except two lessons were good or better. In over half of lessons seen in the sixth form, teaching and learning were very good or excellent. Assessment is also very good. Teachers have very high expectations. In most subjects, there is constant challenge and probing questions, as seen in psychology and physical education and in the best lessons in design and technology. Very good subject knowledge allows teachers to be at ease and enjoy their teaching. In business education, the excellent commercial experience of teachers is used well to illustrate points and to relate the subject to the real world but in mathematics, there is not enough use of real life applications.
37. Nearly all students apply themselves diligently and positively and expect much of themselves and their teachers. They enjoy a challenge, as seen with an able group of Year 13 students when grappling with some challenging exercises in a critical thinking lesson. The quality of teachers' preparation allows most lessons to flow at a brisk pace with very good use of time and teacher-devised handouts are tailor made to the needs of students. In history, lessons invariably start on a positive note because of well-devised introductory exercises. There is usually a very good balance between teacher input and activities which involve students in taking responsibility for their own learning and only occasionally does over-didactic teaching occur. In the sciences, experimental methods are exceptionally well taught. Students have good access to computers and use ICT well to support their learning in many subjects.
38. There are good working relationships in lessons where students feel comfortable in asking for help. Teachers are also readily available outside lessons time and students interviewed acknowledged that as a strength of the school. Most students involve themselves willingly in discussion but some are more reticent in Year 12, as seen with one group in history where a few students tended to dominate. In mathematics, students could benefit from more

opportunities to explain their reasoning and in business education, students are not encouraged enough to think critically about business concepts.

39. Ongoing assessment is very good and marking is constructive, whether with concise informative comments, as seen in history, or with the more detailed comments in psychology. Students have a very good understanding of how they can improve. Effective questioning skills are employed in mathematics and elsewhere to check understanding and there is regular testing. Self-assessment is used very well. Targets are used to set standards and to promote high aspirations and are applied rigorously in physical education. Students in their learning benefit enormously from assessment being very closely linked to examination requirements. The way students are prepared for external assessment is a strong point of teaching, is usually done imaginatively, rarely becomes pedestrian, and has a significant bearing on examination results.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is good overall. The science college status is having a positive impact on standards and curriculum opportunities. There is a very good range of enrichment activities. Overall, staffing, accommodation and resources are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Science college status is having a positive impact on many aspects of school life.
- The provision for PSHE, and that for physical education in the sixth form, is excellent.
- The sixth form provides a rich and very good programme of studies and extra-curricular activities.
- The pupils have wide-ranging experiences through a very good enrichment programme.
- Gifted and talented pupils have many opportunities to reach their potential, but the overall monitoring of the effectiveness of provision is not thorough.
- Shortcomings in the staffing of the ICT curriculum constrain achievement, especially in Years 7 and 8.
- Requirements are not met for the provision of a daily act of collective worship in the sixth form.

### **Commentary**

40. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good overall. National Curriculum citizenship is included in the personal, social and religious education (PSRE) programme, although its provision across other subjects is not effectively monitored or assessed. Drama is taught as an additional subject and has a positive impact on the pupils' personal and social development. The provision of dance as a discrete subject further extends the breadth and richness of the performing arts curriculum across Years 7-11. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is of a good quality and range. Pupils choose from a good range of GCSE options and there is a limited choice of vocational courses on offer. The school has chosen this traditional route having assessed the pupils' needs and further education requirements. In addition, there are some pre-vocational courses for a small number of pupils who have difficulty coping with a full range of GCSEs. The well co-ordinated pre-vocational courses provide well for the pupils, raise their self-esteem and confidence and pupils' progress is tracked effectively. In Years 10 and 11, the most able pupils can only follow a dedicated course in ICT if they are prepared to study after school. The management of the curriculum is good and ongoing review establishes where things might be improved. This is well supported by a well informed governing body who act effectively as a critical friend. There has been a successful implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy in most subjects and will now be implemented across remaining subjects as part of an ongoing programme.

41. Careers guidance for pupils is very good. Pupils receive full information about the optional subjects, including the views of older pupils. The careers advice programme is well planned and very effective. Work experience for Year 10 pupils makes good use of local businesses and is carefully monitored. Governors and local business representatives volunteer to give valuable first hand experiences. Overall provision for work-related learning is satisfactory.
42. The school has identified a large number of pupils who are gifted and talented. Individual faculties such as science, English, modern foreign languages, physical education and design and technology offer stimulating additional work to enable pupils to reach their potential but this is not the case in all subjects. The overall monitoring of the provision does not yet track pupils' progress or assess the effectiveness of monies spent on individual projects. There has been a range of additional activities organised to enrich the pupils' experiences but these are not always carefully mapped. Close links to local colleges and universities give pupils a good insight into further education and often broaden their horizons.
43. The provision for personal, social and health education, which is delivered through the school's PSRE programme, is excellent. It is exceptionally well planned to ensure that the pupils have a balanced view of all topics and are then able to make their own well-informed decisions. A small, dedicated team of teachers is involved in teaching this programme. Monitoring of the quality is thorough and the teachers are continually updating their materials. Resources are very good and all lessons are taught in a stimulating environment. Local speakers and many visits add positively to the pupils' experiences.
44. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good overall with particular strengths in science, sport, the arts, music and modern foreign languages. The performing arts faculty stages very popular productions which involve a large number of pupils from all different groups within the school. In addition, there are many musical clubs and the opportunity to study individual instruments. The pupils are successful in local and regional competitions in football, hockey, athletics and netball. Individuals represent the country in a number of activities such as rugby and football. There are many trips both in this country and abroad such as skiing, yearly visits to countries such as France and Germany and sports trips to Spain. Geography field work effectively supports the pupils' learning. Outdoor adventure activity camps are very popular and add positively to the pupils' personal development.
45. The addition of science college status has had a very positive impact on many aspects of the school's provision. It has helped to improve the quality of accommodation and resources, particularly for science. Close links have been developed with primary schools. The pupils all have an innovatively designed science passport that helps them to track their progress and introduce them to new topics. These are well used in the primary sector and ensure continuity when the pupils arrive at this school. Pupils in Year 10 can choose to be science ambassadors. This increasingly popular role is developed by helping younger pupils with revision, in clubs such as astronomy and the Lord Mayor's competition. There has also been a strong drive to support ecological issues and towards promoting a healthy lifestyle for pupils, parents and the local community. The science college specialism has promoted stronger links with local industry and businesses which has a positive impact on the work-related learning curriculum. The pupils talk enthusiastically about how the science college status has improved the school environment and their facilities.
46. The curriculum experienced by students with SEN in the mainstream and in the HI unit is good. All students follow a similar curriculum with a minimum level of withdrawal for students with SEN. However, for a very small number of students with complex needs, more precise target setting may indicate the need for a greater level of withdrawal for specialised individual help at an earlier stage. The pre-vocational education programme with its more varied range of learning styles is effective in engaging students in Years 10 and 11. The alternative curriculum is good and shows its value when off-site provision has managed to encourage one pupil to study for an entry to GCSE mathematics and has guaranteed him a steady job at a prestigious stable after leaving school.

47. The match of staffing to the curriculum is very good. Nearly all subjects are taught by well-qualified specialist teachers or by teachers whose long experience in teaching allied subjects, for example, in humanities, supports the curriculum and students' learning very well. The key exception is in ICT, where there is too much reliance on non-specialist teachers in Years 7 and 8. Vocational business studies in the sixth form is particularly well served by teachers who bring relevant commercial and business experience to their teaching. The staffing of the curriculum for students with SEN, including those in the HI unit, is good, well qualified and experienced.
48. Resources make a good contribution to learning with a close link between the allocation of resources and the aims of the school development plan. Up-to-date equipment and books throughout the school are in plentiful supply. The library has recently been refurbished so that it now has the appropriate number of books relevant to the courses taught and to the wider education of the students. ICT resources have been greatly improved since the last inspection, with the result that ICT makes a good contribution to learning across the curriculum. ICT equipment is very good in science and design and technology. The school broadens its range of resources by organising a wide choice of visits to sites, events, performances and museums. The resources for supporting students with SEN are satisfactory: the development plan has identified the need for additional access to computers so that suitable programs could be used for more effective teaching.
49. The school's accommodation is very good and supports the teaching of the curriculum very well indeed. There are excellent specialist facilities for teaching science, design and technology, art, PSRE and music in modern purpose-built wings. Pupils with SEN also have access to specialist, modern accommodation.

## **Sixth form**

50. The school provides a rich and very good programme of studies and extra-curricular activities, which serves the interests of students who enter the sixth form very well. It offers 24 AS/A-levels and six vocational A-levels in business, health and social care, ICT, leisure and recreation, science and travel and tourism, and there are good opportunities to combine academic and vocational courses. Subject choices are broadened by some joint provision with the adjacent secondary school in vocational provision and reciprocal arrangements are possible in some other subjects. The take-up for vocational subjects is small, with business being the main attraction, but with a wider range of students being accepted into the sixth form it is anticipated that demand will increase. The school feels that pupils who wish to pursue other vocational courses, which the school does not offer, are well catered for at the local college and that it would be pointless duplicating resources. Many students take advantage of the work experience programme in Year 12 offered in the summer term.
51. The very successful general studies programme helps in maintaining the broad programme of education and makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. During the inspection, an extremely well presented and thought provoking assembly on raising money for charity was well received and applauded but the school, however, does not meet the requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship. Weekly discussion groups in tutorial time on common themes add further to students' general education. The critical thinking course, offered in Year 13 and leading to an AS examination, is another example of a worthwhile broadening of provision. The physical health and welfare of students benefit from the extensive and mandatory programme of sporting and leisure activities. Japanese is available as an after-school enrichment opportunity for sixth formers.
52. In the programme of extra-curricular activities, there are visits to art galleries, theatres, festivals, museums and to industry, as well as involvement in subject field trips. The school is also alert to conferences or college open-days from which students can benefit. Enrichment activities also embrace numerous examples where students are involved in contributions to the wider life of the school and the local community. There are plenty of opportunities for all

students to be involved. The Camp Kenya expedition organised in the summer holidays has a high profile in the school consisting of two weeks of community-based projects, a week of safari, water sports activities and a week to climb to the summit of Mount Kenya or Mount Kilimanjaro. Nearly 50 students have been involved in preparations for the experience.

53. Accommodation is mostly very good and some is excellent but in business studies, whilst one of the two teaching rooms is very suitable, the second room is cramped. In addition to their study room, sixth formers have details of rooms which are free in the school at any one time and where they can work privately. Students interviewed appreciated the fact that they had ready access to computers during non-lesson time. There is a good common room which students enjoy for social contacts, although space with growing numbers is becoming an issue. Resources are very good overall. Where shortages of books have been revealed in the library, for example, in newer subjects introduced into the curriculum, steps have been taken to address the issue. There is a very good match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum.

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

The provision for students' care, welfare and health and safety is excellent. The support, advice and guidance, based on monitoring, students receive is excellent. The involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good.

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

- The school is strongly committed to a high quality pastoral provision for all students.
- Induction arrangements for students coming into the school are excellent.
- Assessment information is used well to identify students who are underachieving.
- The inclusion team effectively supports students who have significant barriers to learning.
- Students are encouraged to raise their aspirations to enter the sixth form with a view to going on to higher education.

### **Commentary**

54. The provision for students' care, welfare and health and safety is excellent. The school takes seriously its duty of care for students and has ensured that effective procedures are in place to monitor health and safety and to ensure the welfare of students. Child protection procedures are in place and meet statutory requirements.
55. The support, advice and guidance that students receive is excellent. Year teams stay with students throughout their time in the main school and build strong relationships with students and their families. Students interviewed were confident that they would be able to ask members of staff for help, either academic or personal. The quality of tutorial sessions is very good and makes a significant contribution to students' attitudes, values and personal development. Assessment data is well used to monitor students' progress and identify underachievement. Predicted grades for end of key stage and GCSE examinations are used as minimum grades which students are expected to achieve. Tutors have 1:1 tutorials with students each term and set targets, either academic or pastoral, for improvement. In preparation for external examinations, revision classes are held in most subjects. Mentoring, by members of the senior management team, supports students who are not achieving their potential. Parents are involved automatically in managing any difficulties that arise. The inclusion team provides high quality support for students whose behaviour is a barrier to learning or who are experiencing personal difficulties. They have very good links with external agencies who provide specialist support if required.
56. Induction arrangements for students entering the school in Year 7 are excellent. Turnaround Week in July introduces students to the secondary school curriculum. The science passport

scheme and cross phase bridging units all prepare students well for transfer. Many students attend the summer schools or after-school mathematics and science groups. Students interviewed liked the induction process and were confident their learning had not been adversely affected by moving schools. Very good careers guidance prepares students well for option choices at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 for post-16 studies. The school actively encourages students to enter the sixth form, or other post-16 provision, by introducing them to potential careers that they had previously not considered. Alternative curriculum arrangements are in place to meet the needs of identified students in Year 10. Others, wishing to pursue vocational rather than academic courses, are currently not well catered for.

57. The provision to involve students through seeking their views and acting on them is good. Year councils are the main forum for students to express their views and are held weekly. The school council meets once a term. Form representatives report back to their tutor group but students interviewed were unsure about the business of these forums and any outcomes. Students are actively involved in monitoring their own academic progress and setting themselves meaningful targets to raise their standard of work.
58. Students with special educational needs are very well cared for, guided and supported. They are made to feel comfortable within the school community. This is an inclusive school and all are made to feel part of it. Students speak positively of help given them by their SEN staff. Staff care for them and nurture them and they feel able to go to adults who they trust. Students with hearing impairment feel very well supported and appreciate the efforts made to provide as much support as possible. Students with statements of special educational needs are supported on the basis of need and levels of support vary with the demands of examinations or other priorities. Whilst some students are able to assert an increasing degree of independence, others would value increased help to raise their achievement levels further. Most parents appreciate the support given to them and their child during the annual reviews of progress. The individual education plan targets for the students with SEN are satisfactory but do not offer sufficiently measurable targets to allow a clear assessment of the quantifiable level of individual progress being made, although they have been recently improved.
59. The school has few children for whom English is an additional language and receives no special resources to support them. The students make very good progress overall, and the progress of individual students is monitored effectively by the school's regular systems. The one student who is at an early stage of English acquisition has been assessed by a local specialist unit and a support plan is being developed. The school receives Ministry of Defence assessments of the English language capabilities of children from the locally based Gurkha brigade, but it does not systematically use baseline information about the students' English language capability on joining the school in its support and guidance programmes.

### **Sixth form**

60. Advice, guidance and support is of a very high quality. Throughout their sixth form and in their progression to higher education or employment, students are very well advised. Some students who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that they had not received helpful advice on what to study in the sixth form. Evidence from the inspection did not confirm that and students were highly complimentary about the advice they had been given. There is a coherent programme of advice backed up with events running right through from lower years in the school to the end of Year 13. Individual tutors write top class references for students applying to higher education.
61. Morning and afternoon tutorial groups provide an important social function as well as ensuring that students are kept in touch with the main events of the sixth form. The quality of the weekly discussion in tutorial time on an agreed topic across the sixth form varies, however, depending on the management of that group by the teacher.
62. A very good sixth-form prospectus gives potential students invaluable advice, including on course content and possible progression routes following completion of the course. There is

very good supplementary guidance in other documents, such as 'Get ready for the Sixth Form,' which encourages preliminary reading on specific topics or characters before students start their sixth-form studies.

63. The contract which students agree to if they wish to become sixth form students is not just a paper exercise but a well thought out philosophy which has an impact. Once in the sixth form, a very careful check is kept on students' progress by subject teachers and tutors. Where students are not making sufficient effort in their studies, they are reminded of the targets which should be met and their work is monitored more carefully. Individual formal interviews take place with students usually once a term but can be far more frequent depending on the student. Inclusion of all students is an excellent feature. Comparatively small numbers are currently attracted into the sixth form from other schools but those students or others moving into the area are very quickly integrated. Inclusion for students of all abilities and interests in the sixth form is excellent.
64. The compulsory recreational activities in the sixth form help students in keeping healthy in mind and body.
65. As the sixth form has expanded quickly and students have taken much more interest in the school's affairs, the voice of sixth formers has become more important. Students are well involved in decision-making, but the school recognises that it could do more. The regular daily contact between leadership of the sixth form and students is an important channel of two-way communications and the proximity of the office of the head of sixth form to the common room and main study facilities is a great help. In a healthy and open exchange of views, students and staff invariably sort out issues but at the inspection, students felt that their views on whether or not the examination in general studies at AS should be compulsory or not had not been fully taken on board. The views of the sixth-form social committee, an important body in the school, are taken seriously by the senior leadership of the school and members of that committee were very happy with the prompt responses of the headteacher to their requests.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The partnership the school has developed with its parents is excellent.
- Links with the community are very good.
- Very effective partnership with feeder primary schools ensures no discontinuity in the educational experience of students.
- Very good links with business supports students' learning.
- Exposure to a wide range of careers raises students' academic aspirations.
- Closer links between providers of vocational courses need to be established.

### **Commentary**

66. The school's partnership with its parents is excellent. Parents support the school well and are pleased with the education their child receives. Reports to parents are very good and give a clear statement of what their child has studied, how they have achieved and what they need to do to improve their work. The tutor is the first point of contact with home and is able to build strong relationships with families. Any concerns raised by parents are addressed on the day and contact made with home. The homework diary is an effective means of daily communication between home and school and is rigorously monitored. The annual consultation meeting gives parents the opportunity to discuss progress and set targets with staff based on current assessment information. Other information evenings help parents to

support their child's learning such as introduction to post-16 and higher education, particularly relevant to parents with no previous experience of this level of education. As a specialist science college, ICT workshops have been held for parents and their children. The parents' councils are an excellent means of consulting parents and seeking their views. The enrichment fund provides additional resources and facilities for the school. A fortnightly newsletter keeps parents informed about the activities and successes of the school.

67. The quality of the school's links with the community is very good. Use of the school premises is high by external organisations. Community enrichment is very good and there is a sports fitness and health schedule run in conjunction with the University of Bath. The school also organises an astronomy club and a family science club. Strong links have been made through the science college with national companies based locally. Industry days for Year 9 students, a science day for Year 10 and the engineering road show for Year 11 are well supported. Visits to industry are a regular feature and students are exposed to a wide range of careers. These opportunities encourage students to consider post-16 and higher education to gain qualifications to enable them to access these careers they might otherwise not have considered. There are very good links with local sports clubs which benefit students. The school has representation at governor level from the armed services which are based locally, so it receives good information on the issues related to the mobility of service children. The English language capability of children from Gurkha regiments is assessed by the Ministry of Defence and information sent to the school, but the Ministry's criteria in measuring English mastery are unknown.
68. There is good partnership with other schools and colleges. There are close, consultative, working relationships with primary schools. The mechanisms for the transfer of students into school are excellent. Curriculum-bridging units are in place to support the continuity and progression in learning. The annual primary festival for soccer and netball is organised by the school. Under the FA Charter Standard, soccer training has been given over the last two years to 200 primary teachers. After-school master classes are held in mathematics and science for both gifted and talented primary students as well as enrichment groups. Students in Years 10 and 11 work alongside their counterparts in another secondary school helping with their science coursework. As a Beacon school, partnership with schools in difficulty has been a feature of their outreach work. Links with universities support students' studies and encourage them to continue into higher education. Collaboration with other post-16 providers is good but arrangements for students to study vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 are not well developed.
69. The school works very well with parents and carers and with the community to support students with special educational needs. The HI Unit and the SEN have very good links with the primary feeder schools as well as with external agencies. Parents are involved in the annual review meetings with carers and parents and the school works hard to engage the parents in the process. Meetings take place regularly and the school makes positive attempts to involve all relevant agencies. There are very good links with primary feeder schools. Staff visit primary schools prior to students transferring to the senior school. The community is encouraged to become involved with the school and plays an active part in providing placements for the many youngsters who take an alternative curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

## **Sixth form**

70. The very good links established between the school and parents before students enter the sixth form are continued in Years 12 and 13. Two parents' evenings take place for each of Years 12 and 13, which is very good practice. Where necessary and when a student is not making sufficient progress, direct and regular email links are maintained with parents to update them on progress.
71. There are good links with other schools and colleges for education post-16. Links with the adjacent secondary school has broadened the range of options for students. The schools

share a common school day and common option blocks, so that students can move between each establishment as freely as possible. Links between Sheldon and another secondary school which is looking for advice in developing the science curriculum and building up their sixth form are rewarding for both schools. There are good links with the local college of further education and sociology at the school is taught by staff from that institution.

72. Links with the community are very good and enhance the quality of education considerably. The numerous links with primary schools provide much opportunity for community work for students, as do links with other organisations in the area, including care establishments and charities. Links are also strong with sporting organisations and clubs, and the school does everything possible to ensure that talented students can profit from such links without their studies suffering. There are some very good links with local industry and universities which enable visits and the use of visiting speakers, and links with industry in business and design and technology are excellent.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are very good overall, with a number of outstanding features. The governance of the school, the headteacher's leadership, the leadership of other key staff, and the effectiveness of management are all very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The grasp that governors have of the school's strengths and weaknesses and their involvement in shaping the direction of the school is outstanding.
- The headteacher has ensured that an excellent vision for the school's development is widely shared by all.
- The school's system for development planning is outstanding.
- The quality of leadership and management is strong at all levels in the school, and supported by openness, transparency and accountability in the analysis of performance.
- Where provision is managed outside the faculty structure, in citizenship and work-related learning, its quality has not been monitored sufficiently and it has not had a high priority in improvement planning.
- Governors have ensured compliance with statutory requirements, except for the provision of a daily act of collective worship in the sixth form.

### **Commentary**

73. Sheldon is a school that knows itself very well. It has highly effective systems of self-evaluation in place at every level. A culture of openness, transparency and accountability pervades the school. Students discuss and account for their progress in termly 1:1 interviews with tutors; heads of faculty discuss and account for the performance of each class in their area through detailed reports and discussions with senior management; the school explains and accounts for its performance in high quality information issued to parents and in termly open parents' councils. All such dialogue is based firmly on reliable data and close monitoring of all aspects of performance.
74. The high degree of commitment to continuous school improvement is evident at all levels in the school. The governing body has an excellent breadth of experience, expertise and community representation. Governors have an exceptional grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and play a very strong part in shaping its development. Systems of governance are in many cases exemplary, particularly with regard to the governors' handbook, the induction of new governors, the systematic and timetabled review of school policies, and the systematic financial reviews. These systems ensure the governors are clear about their roles and discharge their responsibilities effectively. They also ensure that governors closely

monitor the work of the school. The annual report of governors to parents charts the progress of the school very clearly. The governors' Strategy Committee, consisting of the chair of governors, the headteacher and chairs of key committees, meets to help shape the school's overall direction and to ensure effective communication between the committees.

75. The headteacher had been in post for a little less than a year before the inspection, but has already made a significant impact by further refining the school's systems of self-evaluation and asking questions about how performance can be further improved. He has ensured that the school's excellent vision for improvement, based on a clear appraisal of strengths and weaknesses, is widely shared. The headteacher and senior team provide highly effective role models, because all are highly visible in their presence around the school and relate well to the students, and all are involved in the monitoring of whole-school performance. Heads of faculty offer uniformly good or very good leadership and management of their areas: they have a central role to play in the monitoring of students' academic performance and in the performance management of teachers, and they are a real strength of the school. However, provision which is outside the faculty structure has not been so well managed. In citizenship and work-related learning, while audits have been completed which demonstrate that students are getting adequate provision, systems to monitor and assess the quality of that provision have been weak and, as a result, improvements in these areas have not been made priorities.
76. The very good and effective system of performance management is totally integrated into the work of the school and is instrumental in maintaining high standards of teaching and learning. In agreeing their objectives with line managers, teachers are made accountable for both their academic and pastoral work. Pupil progress objectives are tightly focused and based on accurate, pupil performance data. Non-teaching line managers are shortly to undergo training in order to implement an appraisal system, which will complement that of the teaching staff. Teachers new to the school are quickly integrated into staff teams through the very good induction programme which, for newly qualified teachers, gives access to both school and LEA training sessions. There is a high level of commitment to initial teacher training born out by the school's very close links with local universities and training providers. The school has a strong commitment to continued staff development. This is evident in the recent training of curriculum staff to undertake increased management responsibilities. The school's strategic thinking following the national agreement on workforce reform has enabled the creation of a number of key posts which improve the school's administrative capacity and which provides additional support for students' learning.
77. The headteacher, senior management team and governors are fully committed to the vision of almost total inclusivity and have succeeded in creating a positive, welcoming environment for many students with SEN. The management of the provision for students with SEN is good, as is the management of the HI unit. Annual reviews are conducted appropriately and IEPs have been improved. The teaching assistants are well deployed for the greater good. However, their relatively small numbers mean that the changing needs of individual HI students are not always responded to quickly enough so there needs to be closer liaison to respond more immediately to students' short-term needs.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

**The school's system for development planning is outstanding, because it enables full participation of staff and governors in setting the school's priorities for improvement.**

The school's system for development planning is outstanding, because it establishes clear whole-school priorities, yet is firmly grounded in a clear analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses in every subject. The plan is a three-year rolling programme, so that it allows for longer-term planning but is subject to annual review. Whole-school priorities are set through discussion between the senior management team and the governors' Strategy Committee, so that governors are fully involved in shaping the school's direction. Each autumn, every faculty head has a two hour meeting with the senior management team in which the previous year's performance is analysed subject-by-subject, teacher-by-teacher. The discussion then moves on to setting the faculty's development priorities, in the light of the performance analysis and within the framework of whole-school priorities. This method successfully combines a top-down and bottom-up approach to development planning. It also means that faculty heads have the opportunity to make a clearly reasoned case for more resources to support key developments, and that the senior team, including the bursar, can make better informed decisions on how to deploy the school's resources to most telling effect.

78. Whilst the school development plan is rather cumbersome in its present format, the development planning process is excellent, and is supported by excellent approaches to financial management to support the school's educational priorities. Financial controls and procedures are very good.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	5,181,982
Total expenditure	5,054,826
Expenditure per pupil	3,232

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	130,243
Balance carried forward to the next year	257,399

79. The school takes pupils whose attainment is average from generally favourable socio-economic backgrounds. It provides them with a very good quality of education, and they achieve very well and demonstrate very good attitudes to learning. The school has been very well managed, and made very good improvement since the last inspection. It receives funding which is below average to support its work. This below-average funding yields very good outcomes overall, and so the school gives very good value for money.

### **Sixth form**

80. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good and, working in conjunction with strong teaching teams, have played a major part in expanding numbers and provision. The sixth form is very effective and cost effectiveness is very good. The respective strengths of the head and deputy head of sixth form are well used. There has been a candid and rigorous self-evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form and why many students were more attracted by courses at other post-16 institutions. Key changes have been made. The impact of this has been a substantial increase in numbers over the past four years, a wider and more attractive curriculum and much progress in integrating the sixth form more significantly within the general life of the school. These steps were necessary as up to 2004 the size of the sixth form was below the national average despite well above average numbers in the 11-16 age group. The current Year 12 is the biggest lower sixth ever and further growth is expected next year with the staying on rate from the present Year 11 expected to be at least 50 per cent.
81. Expansion has been achieved while maintaining well above average standards overall over the past four years, much to the credit of departmental and faculty teaching and leadership. A

particular strength of the leadership of the head of the sixth form, as well as the ability to bring about change, is the vision shown. Despite substantial progress already, there is no resting on laurels and there are high and realistic ambitions to make very good provision even better. Such vision and ambition is also a hallmark of the school.

82. Governance of the sixth form is very good. Governors are fully involved, lend much expertise and are ready to help in practical ways. They are key participants in the debate on how to move forward in the best interests of students and have high ambitions for a new sixth form block.
83. The head of the sixth form is well supported by the senior leadership of the school. The extra administrative load arising from increased numbers has been recognised and a support worker is planned for the next academic year. An outstanding feature of the management of the sixth form is the way all students are included equally and their individual interests served.
84. Collaborative arrangements with the adjacent secondary school are well handled and joint management arrangements are good. Regular communications between the heads of both sixth forms are being strengthened.

## **WORK-RELATED LEARNING**

Provision in work-related learning is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has good links with local employers and a well-established work experience programme which helps students clarify possible career choices.
- Some faculties have made good progress in helping students learn about work and specialist career options.
- Not all subject areas have a good understanding of the potential contribution of vocational provision and enterprise education to student learning.
- Although provision has been audited, development planning to support work-related learning has not been given sufficient priority.

### **Commentary**

85. The school has a well-established work experience programme in Year 10 for which students are well prepared. A logbook is used to help students reflect on their responses to the world of work. Debriefing and follow-up activity is good and some students have access to additional work experience in Year 11. Good links have been established with many local employers. Careers provision is also well established and most students receive a work experience interview in Year 10 with a possible follow-up in the following year. Mock careers interviews were previously used in Year 10 but have now been discontinued. The impact of this change and other aspects of provision have not been formally evaluated and reviewed.
86. Subjects such as design and technology, science and physical education make good use of the world of work to enhance learning within their subject area. For example, students working with resistant materials work to real design briefs provided by local employers. Students in Year 11 work with local school children as part of their Junior Sports Leaders award. In some cases, work contexts are used without subject teachers understanding that they could contribute to a better understanding of work. Teachers of mathematics do not use work contexts to make learning more realistic.
87. Good use is made of work placements to motivate low-attaining students in Years 10 and 11 but there appears little co-ordination between out-of-school provision and learning in core subjects. Opportunities to accredit students with additional qualifications are missed. This

applies to those students who use more practical work to raise their self-esteem and become better informed as to the skills required in the workplace. There are a limited number of applied and vocational courses on offer to Years 10 and 11, and the introduction of applied GCSE in ICT was not successful: it was targeted at middle to low-attaining students in Year 10 and results were well below expectation.

88. Leadership and management of the work-related curriculum are satisfactory, but have shortcomings. An audit of existing provision has been completed which shows that the school's curricular provision meets requirements. However, the school has yet to produce a policy to guide further provision, and the quality of existing provision is not formally monitored and evaluated. Development planning has not been sufficiently robust to ensure that improvement in this aspect of the school's work is given a high priority. Roles and responsibilities have overlapped. These shortcomings have now been recognised and the school has begun to develop strategies to improve provision.

## **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.
- Computers are used very well to enhance learning.
- Teaching is very good, with lively and stimulating lessons.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very good.
- There are no significant overall weaknesses.

##### **Commentary**

89. On entry to the school, students' attainment is at an average level in English. By the end of Year 9, their attainment in national tests is well above average compared with students in all schools nationally and with those in similar schools. Both boys and girls perform better than their counterparts nationally. The standards in English in Year 9 national tests are similar to those in science but below those in mathematics. Standards of work seen during the inspection are also well above average by the end of Year 9.
90. At GCSE, standards are well above average in English. In 2004, the percentage of students reaching grades A\*-C was well above average, and the percentage of those reaching grades A\*-G was average. Boys reach standards which are above those of boys nationally, whereas girls are well above the levels of all girls. Standards seen during the inspection were well above average in Years 10 and 11. Students speak articulately and the majority write most competently by the end of Year 11. In English literature, GCSE standards are well above average. Students make very good responses to texts as a result of lively and stimulating teaching.
91. Students achieve very well across Years 7-11. They make better progress than students in the majority of schools. Students with special educational needs also achieve very well. The progress of all students is due both to expert teaching, which takes careful account of examination requirements, and to students' very good attitudes to learning.
92. Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils study a wide range of literature, and learn to write for many different purposes. Those in all years write lively poetry for the poetry competition. During the inspection, higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 were seen learning very well to analyse and respond to the poetry of Robert Browning. Pupils with special educational needs in Year 9 were seen learning the power of symbol in *Macbeth*. Assessment is accurate and contributes to learning. Computers are used very well for teaching, to develop pupils' writing and for research. Library skills are taught well. Pupils' learning is enhanced by attractive and informative displays in classroom.
93. The faculty is very well led and managed, with some outstanding features. Examination results and students' progress are analysed extremely well, and very good use is made of the resulting data to determine actions and improve students' work. Students' achievement is enhanced as a result. The head of faculty has identified groups who need to improve in writing

and has implemented changes to bring about improvement through the use of computers on a regular and frequent basis. The use of computers with projectors for teaching has been particularly well introduced.

94. The faculty contributes significantly to work-related learning through running the work experience briefing morning, getting GCSE coursework based on work experience from students and teaching them to collaborate well through group-work in class.
95. The improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The faculty has maintained standards at well-above-average levels, rising to the challenges of curriculum change.

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

96. The standards of students' language and literacy skills are well above average. They make extended spoken contributions in lessons because they are taught well. In mathematics, teachers stress the need to articulate thoughts clearly; in religious education and art and design students listen and speak very well. They write competently and at length when required. In design and technology, their extended writing is technically accurate and their evaluations of their work are precise because of teachers' clear guidelines. Grammatical terminology is taught consistently by the faculties of English and modern foreign languages. Specialist vocabulary is taught in all subjects, and is reinforced by the display and use of key words.

### **French and German**

In Years 7 to 9, half the school studies French and half German. In Year 9, all students study two languages for two terms. In Years 10 and 11, they all study at least one language and a small number study two. Since January 2005, a small group of gifted and talented Year 8 students have been studying Russian.

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In 2004, GCSE results in German were among the best in the school.
- In 2004, GCSE results in French declined from above average in 2003 to average.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 have less than positive attitudes to modern foreign languages.

### **Commentary**

97. German results have been consistently above average and in 2004 were among the best in the school. The girls' results were well above average and both boys and girls performed better in German than in most of their other subjects. Students achieved very well to gain these German results. Over the past four years, French GCSE results have fluctuated. From being above average in 2003, they fell to average in 2004: achievement in French was unsatisfactory in 2004. The department reports that in this instance long-term staff absences had an adverse effect on many students' attainment in Year 11. The students, especially the lower-attaining boys, performed worse in French than in nearly all their other subjects.
98. Standards in the current Year 9 in French and German are above average overall. Students achieve well. A small number of middle-attaining boys in German in Year 8 do not concentrate enough to make enough progress. Most students develop their speaking and listening skills well, although more intensive language practice sessions would help less confident students improve their pronunciation. Students develop their writing skills satisfactorily and most are aware of the need for accuracy in grammar. Higher and middle attainers in German make continuous progress in developing their skills in writing in detail and at length. In French,

students in Year 7 have similar opportunities to write extensively, but do not make enough consistent progress in this skill until they reach Year 9.

99. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average overall. Most students achieve well overall. Lower attainers are mostly well catered for and respond well to firm, focused teaching. Most higher attainers, and particularly those learning German, perform and achieve very well in the closely structured examination course, particularly in writing their coursework assignments under the close guidance of their teachers. A few in French in Years 10 and 11, including some higher attainers, have less positive attitudes to languages than others in the same class, and their achievement is unsatisfactory. Students indicate that such negative attitudes are the result of frequent changes in teachers encountered in recent years.
100. Teaching and learning are good overall. Half the lessons seen were very good and students learnt very well as a result. In one lesson for lower and middle-attaining boys, students did not respond well to the teacher's management and made little progress. All teachers prepare their lessons very well and cover a good range of activities and skills. A few lessons were enhanced very successfully by PowerPoint presentations. Teachers have high expectations of their students. There is, however, some inconsistency across the department in the use of the modern foreign language and in the amount and quality of marking of written work by teachers. Teachers do not always ask students in Years 7 to 9 to correct or redraft their written work.
101. Leadership is good and the head of department has a clear vision for the future. Recent long-term staff absences are reported to have affected standards adversely in French, but the department is working very hard together to recover from these disruptions. Setting arrangements are being revised successfully. The programme of visits and exchanges is well used to contribute to students' personal development and language skills. Areas for improvement in management, which is satisfactory overall, include a review of departmental responsibilities, inclusion of some essential departmental policies in the handbook and closer monitoring of French teaching and exercise books.
102. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The department is improving after a fall in standards in French last year. Previous high standards in German have been maintained.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good overall and leads to well above average attainment: teachers help students to develop their skills in learning for themselves.
- Expectations of students' work and behaviour are very high and students meet these expectations.
- Students are prepared very thoroughly for tests and examinations.
- Good use of ICT by teachers enhances teaching and learning.
- Mathematical skills and knowledge are sometimes learned without being linked to a meaningful and relevant context.
- Students are often required to explain their ideas, methods or answers orally but seldom in writing.

### **Commentary**

103. Results in the national end of Year 9 tests have been well above average compared with all schools nationally for the last five years. They are also well above average compared with

similar schools. This represents very good achievement for students whose attainment on entry is broadly average. Results in these tests show a rising trend.

104. The 2004 GCSE results were 15 percentage points above the national average and those in 2003 were 18 percentage points above. They are significantly above average and show that, for these groups of students, achievement from Years 7 to 11 was very good.
105. Current work in Years 7 to 11 maintains the high standards achieved in test and examinations in recent years. Students of all abilities and in all years, including those with special educational needs, develop their mathematical skills very well through the rigorous approach taken by teachers who ensure that all students are provided with suitably demanding tasks. Most students have very good skills in mental arithmetic for their ages. In some lessons, students are required to explain their mathematical reasoning and are able to do this reasonably well orally but they find difficulty in writing this out in words, particularly the younger students in lower-attaining groups. Written explanations, where these are expected, reveal some lack of clarity or inaccuracies in the correct use of mathematical vocabulary. Students are trained very effectively in how to approach test and examination questions and this contributes to their success. They are not routinely presented with relevant contexts for their mathematical manipulations and, as a result, students are not always able to give a range of examples of why or when they are useful. A team of students entered the UK mathematics challenge in 2004. They were the regional winners and took part in the national finals.
106. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Lessons are very carefully planned so that students learn very well the techniques intended. Classroom management and relationships are very good so that learning takes place in a secure, supportive, orderly atmosphere. Students are expected to work hard and they do, with diligence and concentration. Teaching makes good use of ICT; there are interactive whiteboards in every mathematics classroom and teachers use them creatively to engage students' interest. Students in some years are given advice about useful web-sites to access for revision or for independent work. Classes work effectively in the school's computer suite about once a month. Teachers routinely expect students to follow instructions, from textbooks or worksheets, by themselves. As well as developing students' mathematical and reading skills, such expectations also give them confidence in learning on their own, without constantly resorting to teachers for help. Teachers are right in their persistent demands for students to use mathematical terms correctly and to emphasise key words. Assessment is very good. Teachers pose pertinent questions in lessons to elicit the extent of students' understanding. Many frequently pose questions designed to develop very well students' investigative skills. Tests are given regularly and through these students are fully aware of how well they are doing and at what levels they are working.
107. Leadership and management are very good. Teamwork in the mathematics department is excellent. Teachers constantly review their practice and share ideas. They keep very good records of students' attainments and check to ensure that all students are achieving as highly as possible. Schemes of work are sound but contain no references on how mathematics contributes to developing students' skills and knowledge in areas such as citizenship or work-related learning or how the mathematical skills being taught are applied in other subjects or areas of life. Resources are good. Some textbooks are shared and not generally available for students to take home, although homework booklets are provided. The department occupies a separate block of classrooms in which a distinctly mathematical ethos has been created with good displays.
108. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards have been maintained at well above average levels. The quality of teaching is even better now. The use of ICT has improved greatly. Lesson objectives are shared with students and students are aware of their learning gains.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

109. Students' competence in, and use of, mathematics across the curriculum is very good. Most students have the necessary numeracy skills to cope with the mathematical demands in other subjects. Students' skills in measurement and in drawing and interpreting charts and graphs are particularly strong and put to very good use in subjects such as science and design and technology. The school is not complacent and continues to work at strengthening teachers' understanding across all subjects of how each one can contribute to enhancing even further students' skills in numeracy and in applying them in many different situations.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in tests and examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11 are well above average.
- Teaching is very good and this leads to very good achievement.
- There are excellent primary school links, which eases the transition for Year 7 students.
- Assessment and target setting are very good.
- There are no significant weaknesses.

### Commentary

110. The national examination results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well above average and broadly in line with those for 2003 when they were also well above average. The GCSE results for 2004 were well above average and girls performed better than boys. These results were slightly lower than those for 2003, although more students in 2004 achieved or bettered their targets than in 2003. The overall results for the pre-vocational students, who follow the single award applied science course, were average in 2004 and similar to those for 2003.

111. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average by Years 9 and 11, and, in comparison with their standards on entry to the school, represent very good achievement. Students in Year 9 are able to describe causes of variation in species and higher attainers are able to present arguments for and against genetic modification. Year 11 students have sound knowledge of factors that affect the rate of chemical reactions. The written work of all students is of a high standard with very few exceptions. Their numeracy skills are very good and they are well able to cope with this aspect of the science curriculum. During practical lessons, they handle apparatus and chemicals with care and respect and have well-developed investigative skills. The attitude and behaviour of students during lessons is very good and they are well motivated. They listen attentively and are keen to answer questions. There is no apparent difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

112. Teaching is very good overall in all years and students learn very well because of this. The very good subject knowledge of teachers enables them to give clear explanations of difficult concepts to students to help them learn. Lessons are well organised and generally contain a variety of activities which maintains students' interest and helps to motivate them, although some lessons involve more routine completion of tasks and offer less stimulation. Teachers have high expectations and constantly ask challenging questions. There are very good relationships between teachers and students so students feel at ease to ask for help if they need it. Good attention is paid to literacy and new terminology is emphasised. Number skills are frequently practised through drawing of graphs and the use of scientific formulae.

113. Very good use is made of ICT in lessons. Teachers use PowerPoint to full advantage and there are ample opportunities for students to use computers and data-logging equipment to enhance their learning. Good use is made of homework to extend and reinforce work covered in lessons. Assessment is rigorous and is used to set targets and inform planning. All students are aware of their targets and have individual progress sheets in their exercise books. Marking of work is accurate and informative.
114. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The relatively new head of faculty has a clear sense of direction and the staff work together as a team striving to achieve improvement. Extra-curricular provision is excellent. Many older students are designated 'science ambassadors' and are involved in helping with extra-curricular activities. There is a science club for younger students and one for local primary school students, an astronomy club led by a local astronomical society and a family science club, which allows parents the opportunity to share in their children's learning. Other external links include universities and local industry. The department has benefited from the Science College status, and continues to do so: this has enabled the refurbishment of the now excellent accommodation and purchase of new ICT equipment. The departmental displays are excellent and provide a stimulating and informative learning environment. Resources are very good and the department is well supported by a team of technicians.
115. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The high standards seen then have been maintained, new courses have been introduced for Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE level, the accommodation has been refurbished, and new ICT equipment has been purchased.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in examinations at the end of Year 11 have been weak.
- There is good improvement in standards of work seen in GCSE coursework and in the examination work seen during the inspection.
- Teaching by specialist teachers is good overall, leading to good learning.
- Subject knowledge of the non-specialist teachers in Years 7 and 8 is insufficient to support learning.
- The system operating in Years 7 and 8 brings about a lack of continuity that disrupts learning.
- The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is good, but there are inadequate arrangements in place to assess the capability of those students who do not follow accredited courses in Years 10 and 11.
- Higher-attaining students are keen enough to learn ICT in voluntary after-school sessions.

### **Commentary**

116. GCSE results in 2004 were well below average and below the standards of the same students in their other courses. In 2003, a high proportion of Year 11 students had been ungraded in full and part award GNVQ courses. ICT had not been examined before 2003.
117. Students enter the school with average levels of ICT capability. In Year 7, their basic skills are sufficient to meet the needs of the set tasks; but almost all design to please themselves with too little awareness of the need to meet the preferences of the intended user. Year 8 students work below expected levels in modelling with a high proportion unable to explain the formulae that they are using. Standards of work are at the level expected for Year 9. In particular, Year 9 students learn to write instructions to control physical movement with new software quickly,

and show expected levels of understanding of the principles underpinning the process. Teacher assessments of Year 9 pupils' capability in ICT in 2004 were in line with national averages, and have shown a significant strengthening over time. In Year 11, current work is also at expected levels. This represents good improvement over the examination results in 2004. Higher attaining students in Years 10 and 11 studying ICT as an extra subject after school have good subject knowledge. The majority in middle and lower-attaining sets carry out satisfactorily the procedures that they are learning. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

118. The achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall in relation to their prior knowledge, although this conceals unsatisfactory achievement by a considerable proportion of students in those lessons taught by non-specialists in Years 7 and 8. Students' achievement overall is supported by the many good opportunities they get to apply ICT to support their learning in a range of other subjects. Students with special educational needs achieve well, but there are too few opportunities for the highest attainers to be challenged at the highest levels of ICT capability.
119. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9 and good throughout Years 10 and 11. Teaching by specialist teachers of ICT is good throughout the school. Teachers engage the students' interest by well-paced, well-planned lessons with clear introductions. Teachers give good quality individual support, and they use homework well to support learning, especially at GCSE. Although written assessments are not immediate enough to identify means of improvement to the students, informal ongoing assessment promotes improvement well. Teachers encourage students to evaluate their own work, but their judgements are not supported by reasons. Teaching by non-specialists supporting very large classes in Years 7 and 8 is unsatisfactory as they do not have enough subject knowledge to identify or help students who do not grasp the principles during the introduction by the specialist teacher. There is no guarantee that Year 8 students will be taught or supported by the same teacher in consecutive lessons during the same week, so that teachers do not have good knowledge of what each student has experienced or attained during the previous lesson. As students have allocated seats in ICT rooms, the same students are with the non-specialist teachers every time – they therefore do not have equal access to learning. The teaching of Year 9 students in design and technology groups is good in that the expertise of the two teachers benefits the students. In addition the students have the same lead teacher in all lessons so that progress can be tracked and issues identified quickly.
120. The department is well led by a knowledgeable head of faculty who is a good role model in his own teaching and communicates well with other staff to bring about consistency of approach, with a resulting rise in standards. The department is well managed; the new head of faculty has analysed the situation well so that his actions have already brought about good improvement. Less than half of the students in Years 10 and 11 have a specific course in ICT, and rely for the development of their knowledge on the experience that they have of the use of ICT in other subjects. Students experience every area of the National Curriculum, although they are not taught to develop all aspects. The school monitors the use of ICT by subjects but does not track or assess individual experience to ensure that it is adequate. Although the experience of Year 10 and 11 students was not reported in 2004, the school has firm plans to remedy this statutory breach in 2005.
121. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, with more available equipment, greater access to ICT lessons and well-organised use of ICT in other subjects. However, the school now needs to resolve the issues of non-specialist teaching in Years 7 and 8 and assessment in Years 10 and 11.

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

122. Students are given good opportunities to use ICT to support learning in other subjects, and they carry out tasks with satisfactory competence. In design and technology, science, music and art and design, it is very good. Teachers have been trained in the use of ICT in their

subjects. They contribute to the learning of ICT by teaching students to measure record and analyse data in science and to use computers to control movement by designing and manufacturing in design and technology. In art and design and music, specialist applications are very supportive of learning, especially in Years 10 and 11. ICT is therefore a natural part of teaching and learning across the school, and supports the maintenance of students' capability where they do not have regular lessons in the subject.

## **HUMANITIES GEOGRAPHY**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students make good progress in all years because of consistently good teaching.
- Teachers are able to use new technology well to maintain students' interest and to help them to learn.
- Students are well prepared for their examinations. However, there are too few opportunities for students to explore fully the richness of geographical topics.
- Day-to-day assessment of pupils' learning is good, but in major assessments, the links between the criteria used for assessment and teachers' marking are not clear enough.

### **Commentary**

123. Attainment in GCSE examinations in 2003 was above national averages for students gaining grades A\*-C. Girls outperform boys in the percentage of students gaining the highest two grades, but the performance of boys has improved greatly since the last inspection.
124. Students enter the school with varying levels of geographical knowledge but overall standards are average. During Years 7 to 9, achievement is good so that by the end of Year 9 standards are above those which are expected from students of a similar age. Students make good gains in knowledge and can apply geographical ideas in a variety of contexts. All students respond well orally, but average and lower attainers have difficulty formulating their ideas in writing.
125. By Year 11, students' attainment is above average and in Years 10 and 11 their achievement is good. Approximately a third of Year 10 studies geography. All students, including a substantial number of students of average and below average prior attainment, build on the good foundations established in Years 7 to 9 and maintain their standards as the work becomes more demanding. Students with special needs make comparable progress because they are well supported by their teachers, particularly when completing coursework.
126. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan their lessons effectively. Students are kept well motivated through a varied programme of activities in each lesson. Learning is enhanced by the use of PowerPoint presentation techniques to engage students' attention, and to model geographical phenomena. Open questions encourage all students to think carefully and to make perceptive contributions to class discussions. Teachers are skilled in preparing students for their examinations. Case study research is tightly focused. However, this inhibits students' full exploration of topics and restricts students' writing. Teachers use in-class assessments to plan future lessons and students' attainment is regularly measured in structured exercises. However, in these assessments, the links between task sheets, mark schemes and teachers' comments are not strong enough so that students' future improvement targets are not specific enough.
127. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Performance data, supported by a range of informal strategies, is used to monitor the work of individual students and teachers.

Teachers' continual professional development is fostered in departmental meetings through the sharing of good ideas and strategies and the team has both the capacity and determination to continue to improve.

128. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Issues identified at the last inspection have been addressed well. ICT has been well integrated into the curriculum. Spelling is still insecure for a minority of students.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

## MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- GCSE results in 2004 were above average but below average at A\* grades.
- The percentage opting for GCSE is much higher than the national average.
- Lessons are well structured, and there is very good preparation for examinations.
- The criteria for assessing students' work is written in 'pupil friendly language' which helps them to understand what is required to succeed.
- High quality external visits are well chosen and broaden students' experiences.
- Newly qualified teachers receive high quality support.

## Commentary

129. GCSE results were above average in 2004. Nearly half of all Year 11 students were entered for the subject. There has been a steady improvement in results in the last two years but the percentage of A\* grades was below average in 2004.
130. Current standards in Year 9 are above national expectations and this represents good achievement. However, some students in Year 9 are not as mature in their approach to learning as they could be and were seen struggling in understanding the potential dangers posed by the Cuban Missile Crisis despite good encouragement to think critically of possible outcomes. Higher and average-attaining students make good progress and achieve well and some individuals in top sets achieve very well. Lower attainers make good progress in their understanding of events but some are held back in their written work by poor literacy skills. The department is doing much to tackle this problem through much guidance to students on how to write concisely but informatively. By Year 9, the majority can use historical sources well and can appreciate how there can be different interpretations of the same event. They can empathise well with people of the past, as seen in completed work in books, for example, when writing home as a soldier fighting in France. There are also plenty of examples in Years 7 to 9 of higher attainers taking full advantage of opportunities to express their ideas in writing and producing high quality pieces of work, for example, on the causes of the French Revolution in Year 8.
131. Current standards in Year 11 are above average, helped much by the ability of most students to express themselves well in writing. The work, which the department has already done in lower years, in improving literacy skills bears fruit. In addition, students in Years 10 and 11 make further significant strides in handling sources. Higher attainers in the top set in Year 11 showed well above average skills in handling source material related to the Nazi success in the elections of 1932 and 1933. Skills of interpretation vary. In a mixed-ability Year 11 class, although standards were average overall, lower attainers had difficulty in teasing out the more challenging aspects of a political cartoon, despite a very good handout providing helpful tips to help students with their interpretations. Overall, students achieve well in Years 10 and 11.
132. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Lesson quality ranges from satisfactory to very good and there are some excellent features. In well-structured lessons, brief but often

innovative starter activities set the scene well. Lessons mostly move on at a very good pace with very good use of time. End of lesson summaries invariably reinforce what has been learned and a very good example of that was seen with a Year 9 class where the teacher pulled together the various strands of the lesson skilfully while maintaining challenging questions and interest. In some lessons, however, plenary sessions become unnecessarily repetitious when checking with students whether the main objectives of the lesson have been met. Teachers place a very good emphasis on preparing students for their forthcoming examinations. Questioning of students is very good. Assessment has some very strong features and in particular in the way students understand and use the criteria for assessing their work and that of others. Good guidance on how to use the Internet develops students' research skills well. There is improved use of ICT as students and teachers extend their skills but the department is only at the outset of some far reaching plans to develop use further.

133. Leadership and management are good and there are very good aspects. The acting head of department has been successful in holding the department together following some late changes in staffing near the outset of the school year. He has proved an excellent role model through the example he sets by his own teaching and in the way he has nurtured and supported his staff, particularly two newly qualified teachers. In addition, the department has not stood still. Some important developments have been introduced, including creating a top set at GCSE to improve the results of higher attainers at A\* grades. Good improvement has been made with assessment and very good strategies for improving the thinking skills of students are being developed. External visits, including castles, the Imperial War Museum and the battlefields of Picardy and Flanders, add a further important dimension to students' experience.
134. Improvement since the last inspection is good: good standards have been maintained throughout.

### **Religious education**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching and learning leads to good achievement by students in Years 9 and 11 and to very good achievement for those who take GCSE.
- GCSE examination results are very good.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.
- Good assessment is being extended, making it even clearer to students how to improve their work.

### **Commentary**

135. Standards of attainment at Years 9 and 11 are above the expectations of the Wiltshire Agreed Syllabus. The standards reached by the last GCSE entry in 2004 were well above national levels, and mark a significant improvement on the average performance of earlier years. Students with special educational needs make good progress as the work is matched to their capabilities and active learning allows them to try out ideas orally before writing. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls.
136. Achievement is good. Students arrive with average standards and their above-average standards by Year 9 reflects their good achievement across Years 7 to 9. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good overall: students achieve well in compulsory religious education and very well in the GCSE groups.

137. Teaching and learning are very good. All the teaching observed was at least good and much very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan and prepare very well. They have very high expectations for all students and use all the time in the double lessons productively. Homework is used regularly to consolidate and extend learning. Students respond to the very good teaching by working very hard. They listen very well and enjoy good relationships with their teachers and each other. They always respect the efforts and views of others. Students are confident speakers and use specialist vocabulary well. They can explain the impact of belief on attitudes and actions. They examine their own values in relation to religious, moral and philosophical questions. The subject continues to make a very good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and visits arranged for each year enrich the curriculum. Assessment is good: many units have an integral assessment and levels are increasingly being used. Assessment is being refined so students understand the fine detail of what the levels mean so they can improve their work.
138. Leadership is very good. The subject leadership has a clear vision for the subject and has developed a full scheme of work to cover both the agreed and examination syllabuses. The subject is very well managed and monitored. The team works very closely together and shares best practice. The non-specialists tend to remain with the department each year and are a valued resource.
139. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The numbers taking the GCSE examination have increased and their results are well above average. Standards at Year 9 have improved, and students now develop independent learning skills and undertake extended writing tasks.

## **TECHNOLOGY DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are well above average.
- Student achievement at GCSE level is very good because of very high quality teaching.
- There are very high standards of designing and creative thinking across the department and in all year groups.
- Students do not spend enough time finishing products to a high enough quality in resistant materials and systems and control in Years 7 to 9.
- The head of department has excellent clarity of vision for developing design education.
- There are very good industrial links which support students' learning.
- The effective use of ICT contributes well to the very high standards of designing.

### **Commentary**

140. GCSE results were well above average overall in 2004 and have been strong over time. In 2004 GCSE examinations, students did particularly well in relation to their prior attainment in graphics and resistant materials where their performance was amongst the best in the school. Results in systems and control were, however, below expectation.
141. Standards on entry to the school are about average and by the end of Year 9 current standards are above average. Achievement is good in Years 7, 8 and 9. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls. The higher-attaining students achieve higher standards because they can express ideas through good annotated sketches and evaluate their work objectively by making reference to product specifications. Students with special educational needs also do well and their confidence is building day by day because

they are encouraged to make design decisions for themselves. In resistant materials and systems and control lessons in Years 7-9, students do not spend enough time finishing products to a high enough standard.

142. Standards in the range of courses offered in Year 11 are well above average. They are highest in graphics, textiles and food studies where there are some stunning examples of students' coursework, for example, designs for the built environment based on Chippenham town centre, food products where students are developing cold sweets, and textiles where exclusive garments are made to very high standards. Again, there is little difference between the performance of boys and girls. Achievement is, therefore, very good in Years 10 and 11. This very high level of achievement is due to the GCSE courses being very well taught and matched to individual students' needs. Those students with special educational needs are very well supported by their teachers in analysing design issues and consequently, are consistently attaining above their GCSE target grades.
143. The quality of teaching and learning is very good with some excellent practice. In the most effective lessons teachers explain clearly what has to be done by their students and have stimulating starter activities that grab students' attention from the outset. The lessons are very well managed and organised and no time is wasted. Excellent lessons are outstanding with a lively and stimulating combination of high expectations, excellent use of question and answer sessions and expert subject knowledge. Very high quality classroom displays and well-structured worksheets support students' designing and also help them develop their strong literacy and numeracy skills. Computer-aided design and manufacture are being used effectively. Homework is used very well and helps students develop and consolidate what they have learned in class. Teachers' marking of GCSE projects provides students with very good guidance on how to improve their work, enabling them to boost their performance.
144. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has excellent vision and negotiates a clear way forward with a very cohesive team of teachers. Very good systems are in place so that the head of department can monitor the teaching and learning and, as a result, use this information to inform development planning. Regular departmental meetings focus on improving standards by evaluating the design and technology curriculum and assessment issues. Very good industrial links are at the heart of the best design and make activities. There are excellent working conditions in the purpose-built teaching block, which exudes an excellent design ethos throughout. A dedicated team of technicians works very hard behind the scenes and their contribution supports teachers very well in striving for high standards.
145. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good: standards, especially by Year 9, have improved, along with a further improvement in the quality of teaching and learning.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

146. Art and design and music were the focus subjects for this inspection but lessons in dance and drama were also sampled as part of the school's extensive performing arts provision.
147. GCSE results in **dance** have been in line with the national average. Current standards reached by students following the GCSE course in dance are above average. They perform fluently and show imagination and flare in their own compositions. The quality of teaching and learning is good and students achieve well. Unsatisfactory teaching and learning was seen on the programme in Years 7 to 9 where students' skills were not developed sufficiently and expectations of pupils' behaviour and performance were lower than can be expected. The extra-curricular provision, however, is good and standards reached are above average. The uptake by boys is very limited.
148. In Years 7 to 9 in **drama**, standards are above average. At GCSE, students reach well above average standards; the percentage of those who gain the top grades is extremely high. They

make very good progress from the time they enter the school. Teaching is good overall; in Years 10 and 11, it is very good. Students in Year 11 were seen producing excellent scenes because their lesson was superbly planned. Students' written work is accurately assessed, but there are insufficient comments in writing on how to improve. Students produce beautiful annual Christmas productions and there are frequent opportunities to showcase their work publicly.

## Art and design

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress from Year 7 to Year 9.
- Results in the 2004 Applied GCSE Examination were well above the national average.
- Students are making good use of ICT as a means of generating exciting images.
- Teachers are well-informed and possess good subject knowledge.
- Formal assessment, tracking and recording systems are in place and operated effectively.

### COMMENTARY

149. The art department has extended the curriculum on offer to students in Years 10 and 11 through the introduction of the applied GCSE examination in art and design. This has been highly successful and the percentage of students that achieved the highest grades A\*-C in the GCSE examination in 2004, at 79 per cent, was much higher than the national average of 49 per cent. Attainment in the single GCSE examination in 2004 was just below the national average. Presently, students in Year 10 are producing work of a standard that is in line with expectations. Year 11 students are making good progress and are producing highly personal images. There is good research work in the visual diaries and evidence of good use of ICT to generate interesting visual material. Overall, standards are above national expectations. Achievement is good for students of all abilities from the start of Year 10 to Year 11.
150. The standard of work produced by students on entry to Year 7 is below national expectations. Early studies in the visual diaries show that students have limited understanding of how to make effective use of line and tone in their drawings. However, they apply themselves readily to the tasks that are set by their teachers and make good progress in the first year. This good progress is continued in Year 8 and into Year 9, when students demonstrate much greater control over line, tone, scale and proportion. Furthermore, most are beginning to make very good use of ICT and the Internet as a means of collecting visual information. Achievement for all groups of pupils is good from the start of Year 7 and overall standards of artwork in Year 9 are in line with national expectations.
151. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good on the applied GCSE course in Year 11. Teachers are well informed, possess good subject knowledge and are very familiar with the requirements of the National Curriculum and the GCSE examination in art and design. Students are therefore given good guidance on how to improve their attainment. Students make good use of computers to enhance the quality of their work and extend their learning, and teachers use the interactive whiteboard well at the beginning of lessons to introduce new material. Behaviour in lessons is usually very good, but in one Year 9 lesson seen there were instances of poor behaviour by a small group of boys.
152. Leadership and management are good. The head of subject has a very clear vision of how he would like to see the department develop over time, and is a very good role model for both staff and students alike. Relationships in the department are good and a highly effective team has been put in place. Assessment is carried out thoroughly, according to the whole-school policy, and records of performance stored on computer, to which all members of the department have access. Teacher assessments of students' attainment at the end of Year 9 are, however, too generous and show attainment to be higher than it actually is.
153. Accommodation is very good. There are three large multi-purpose studios but natural lighting in one of the studios is unsatisfactory due to its construction. Resources are very good and students have ready access to a small ICT suite, which contains six computers, printers and scanners. Displays of artwork in the corridors are impressive and draw attention to the high

quality of artwork produced by the department. Due to the broadening of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 through the introduction of the new applied GCSE in art and design and to the considerable improvement in the assessing, recording and tracking procedures, improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

## **MUSIC**

Provision in music is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All students achieve very well because they receive very good quality teaching which develops their listening skills.
- Students build steadily on previous knowledge because of their teachers' skilled use of good assessment.
- Students have very good opportunities for developing their singing and instrumental skills.
- Opportunities for using computers in Years 7 to 9 are limited.

### **Commentary**

154. GCSE results were above average in 2004 despite a significant increase in the numbers of students opting for the subject. There has been a rising trend in results in recent years.
155. Standards of attainment by Year 9 are well above average. Teacher assessments of students' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above the national average and are on course to improve further in 2005. Students in Years 7 to 9, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well. They make very good progress in their musical skills and knowledge so that by Year 9 students can read musical notation well and use keyboards to compose music for a film extract. Higher-attaining pairs of students understood the way in which tension could be used productively and atmosphere could be created, discussing and testing a range of ideas. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to broaden and deepen their knowledge of musical landmarks, being able to identify the composers of musical extracts and incorporate techniques into their compositions for piano or orchestral instruments. Students then play their compositions at the termly evening concerts, which are of a very high standard. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above average and students in Years 10 and 11 continue to achieve very well.
156. Teaching and learning are very good. The high level of subject knowledge combined with the very good management of students, means that no time is wasted, lessons are entertaining and fun, consequently, students learn to sing and read music very quickly. Teachers have very high expectations of all their students, including those learning instruments, who are given work which challenges each of them. Their learning is layered and complex so that students in Year 7 learn several things simultaneously, such as the notes on the staff, melody, chords, rhythm, pitch and dynamics, and ensemble playing on a very early acquaintance with keyboards. Performance is strong both from instrumentalists and novice players of keyboards. By Year 11, students are confidently using Sibelius to compose music for guitar or wind, brass ensembles or for strings. Correct musical terminology is used throughout, so students have the language to describe and evaluate very perceptively. The teaching of literacy through music is very good. Listening skills are highly developed from the beginning from instructions on lesson routines to listening to the alto line in four-part harmony. Consequently, students by Year 11 cannot only identify extracts from composers but can describe the characteristics of composers as diverse as Aaron Copeland or Mozart. Assessment at every level is very strong and students themselves know the criteria for success so that students' evaluation of themselves and their peers is also very good. Reporting to parents is consequently very informative so parents know exactly how their child is doing and how he or she can improve. Students in Years 10 and 11 use computers very

effectively for composition but in Years 7 to 9 their use is severely limited. Music provides a very good contribution to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural education in the school.

157. Leadership of the department is very good and the music teachers work very well together and provide complementary skills. The management of the department, with its peripatetic teachers, singers and instrumentalists with numerous rehearsals, is very good. There is a very acute sense of professionalism at every level in the department. There is considerable innovation and initiative evident from the introductory discount offered to new students starting to learn an instrument to the Sheldon Young Musician of the Year competition. The graduate trainee is very well supported, and performance of staff in the department is monitored very well. Music now has a high profile in the school through students playing music for their year assembly every day, to termly concerts which showcase the work of the students. The choirs, orchestras and various ensembles provide very good opportunities for the young players to play with experienced musicians from the sixth form, which increases a sense of whole-school cohesion as well as improving musical talents. The department also makes a major contribution to whole-faculty events such as major theatrical productions. There is a courage in the department which allows risk taking, so that several young musicians are given the opportunity to conduct the orchestra during the concerts, even learning the conventions of taking a bow at the end. The department has already very good links with primary schools. It is now in a position to further develop opportunities for students to take their own music into the community and experience music outside through concerts and visiting musicians. There has been a very good improvement in music since the last inspection.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Consistently very good teaching results in well above average standards and very good achievement.
- Very good leadership and management create a very effective learning environment and make a special contribution to the students' personal development.
- High levels of motivation result in very good participation rates and considerable success in extra-curricular activities.
- Students are not consistently involved in setting targets in lessons using National Curriculum levels.

### **Commentary**

158. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average. Students achieved very well and gained better grades than in their other subjects. GCSE results have been strong over time.
159. Standards reached by students in Year 9 are well above average. When students arrive at the school in Year 7, they are just average. This represents very good achievement over time. They quickly gain new skills and learn how to analyse skills and apply strategies. This underpins their rapid progress. By Year 9, they are able to effectively analyse performance, create practices to make improvements to a particular weakness and then transfer the improved skill into the final activity. They show citizenship skills through leadership, delegation, co-operation and communication. Students with special educational needs achieve equally well and are often talented sports players. Students are encouraged to be independent learners and they thrive on taking responsibility.
160. Standards reached by students in Year 11 are overall well above average. A minority of students attain average standards in games that are new to them. Students achieve very well. Their skills become more consistent and effective. High levels of motivation and the desire to improve play a major contribution to their quality of work. This is particularly evident

in outdoor adventure activities. A considerable number of students opt to follow a GCSE in physical education. Standards reached are well above average. In theoretical aspects, the majority has a good grasp of facts. Weaker long-term recall of fact and theory for a minority of lower-attaining students restricts their achievement.

161. The well-established extra-curricular programme is very popular and has high levels of participation. The school has for the second time gained the Sports Mark Gold Award. Teams for all ability ranges and individuals enjoy success at local, regional and national levels. Organised adventure trips are also very popular and make a valuable contribution to the students all round personal development.
162. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teachers create an effective learning environment through high level of challenge, high expectations of work rate and by demanding high standards of work relative to the ability of the students. Question and answer sessions promote good development of technical vocabulary and understanding of health-related fitness. However, planning for the development of numeracy and ICT skills is not as effective. Homework links well to lessons and extends students well. Marking is mostly constructive but could give more guidance to lower-attaining students. Assessment is used effectively to track the students' progress over time and to make changes to the curriculum and teaching if necessary. Students are not yet consistently involved in setting targets in lessons using National Curriculum levels. Teachers have very good knowledge of the activities they teach and use demonstration effectively to highlight good performance. Those students who are unable to take part in lessons are not always given tasks to involve them closely in what is being taught.
163. Very good leadership of the department has a positive impact in the raising of standards and creating a special environment that the students, parents and school values. Team teaching and close monitoring ensure that any areas for development are quickly addressed. Very clear vision and direction are provided and there is a very good team spirit.
164. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. GCSE results have improved and are consistently very high. Standards in Years 7-11 are now well above average. A greater variety of activities and courses in the curriculum, closely linked to the science college development plan, appeals to all students and often equips them with teaching and organisational skills that will prepare them for future careers.

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

The provision for **personal, social and health education** is excellent. It effectively covers all the required topics. It is exceptionally well planned to ensure that the pupils have a balanced view of all topics and are then able to make their own well educated decisions. The teachers create an atmosphere where the pupils feel safe to air their personal views in a forum of honesty and respect for other peoples' beliefs and opinions. The pupils' records of work and their own evaluations are detailed and enable teachers to make a well-informed statement about each child with regard to their personal development. A small, dedicated team of teachers is involved in teaching this programme. Monitoring of the quality is thorough and the teachers are continually updating their materials. Resources are very good and all lessons are taught in a stimulating environment. Local speakers and many visits add positively to the pupils' experiences.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The National Curriculum is fully in place.

- The active year and school councils are providing valuable experience of the democratic process and opportunities to participate as citizens.
- Students' involvement in all of their citizenship activities is insufficiently monitored.
- Students are often unaware of when they are learning about citizenship.
- Students' achievements in the knowledge, participation and communication strands are not brought together to provide a complete picture of their development as citizens.

## **Commentary**

165. Attainment meets the nationally expected standards overall by Years 9 and 11, and students' achievement is satisfactory across Years 7-11. Students are clearly developing the skills to enable them to be good citizens. The standards achieved in the units that are taught in the Personal, Social and Religious Education programme (PSRE) are above expectations at Years 9 and 11. However, some elements of the citizenship programme are taught within other subjects, and since they are not always clearly identified to students as citizenship, students' achievements in these topics are not adequately measured or readily judged.
166. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the core PSRE units, it is very good. Teachers have high expectations for all students and they motivate students by active learning and discussions. Students respond well to the relevant subject matter and present their views clearly. They show great respect for other people, property and the environment and viewpoints that differ from their own. The subject is also treated as a theme within other subjects and it is not obvious to students that they are studying citizenship. No attempt is made to include all these wider contributions when reporting to parents on a pupil's capabilities in citizenship. Students, however, are developing as citizens and are becoming aware of their responsibilities and rights.
167. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership has understood the requirements of National Curriculum for citizenship and identified where citizenship education takes place within subjects. The units within PSRE are well thought out, the opportunities provided by the operation of the school and year councils for all students to experience the democratic process and participate as citizens within school are very well used. The school assesses students' capability against the National Curriculum statements of attainment in citizenship and reports on that capability as required. However, management has not yet ensured that students are always aware of when they are learning about citizenship. Nor has it yet ensured that all of the achievements of students in the knowledge strand and their efforts in participation, research and communication are monitored and brought together to provide a complete picture of the students' capabilities.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	3	100.0	78.3	33.3	21.6	40.0	28.5
Biology	11	72.7	63.5	0	10.4	17.3	19.8
Chemistry	4	100.0	70.3	75.0	13.2	47.5	23.0
Dance	4	75.0	82.0	50.0	21.9	35.0	29.7
Drama	4	100.0	86.6	25.0	19.8	35.0	30.9
Economics	7	71.4	71.6	14.3	18.6	27.1	25.8
English literature	8	100.0	86.2	25.0	17.4	36.3	29.7
French	7	100.0	79.8	14.3	19.4	34.3	28.2
Design and technology	4	75.0	72.6	25.0	13.9	27.5	24.3
General studies	34	100.0	73.6	58.8	16.9	46.2	25.5
Geography	4	100.0	75.5	0	20.4	30.0	27.0
German	4	100.0	81.6	0	18.8	30.0	28.8
History	4	100.0	82.2	0	20.8	35.0	29.2
Mathematics	9	55.6	59.9	0	14.1	13.3	20.5
Music	1	100.0	79.8	0	16.9	40.0	27.5
Other social studies	7	85.7	67.8	28.6	15.1	28.6	23.2
Physics	8	100.0	66.4	12.5	14.8	31.3	22.4
Sociology	7	85.7	72.1	14.3	19.6	25.7	25.9
Sports/PE studies	4	100.0	72.2	25.0	11.8	40.0	22.8

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	10	100.0	98.3	70.0	50.2	100.0	87.1
Biology	22	100.0	96.6	59.1	40.0	91.8	79.3
Chemistry	12	100.0	97.7	75.0	50.0	106.7	85.7
Dance	2	100.0	98.9	0	42.6	70.0	84.3
Drama	18	100.0	99.6	66.7	42.8	90.0	85.1
Economics	11	100.0	98.8	9.1	54.3	72.7	89.8
English literature	25	100.0	99.4	44.0	44.9	91.2	85.5
French	5	100.0	99.0	60.0	53.1	96.0	88.9
Design and technology	20	100.0	97.8	35.0	35.0	78.0	77.9
General studies	4	100.0	94.9	25.0	30.5	85.0	72.9
Geography	34	100.0	98.8	47.1	46.4	85.3	85.2
German	2	100.0	98.6	50.0	49.6	90.0	86.3
History	15	100.0	99.0	33.3	45.6	86.7	85.1
Mathematics	26	96.2	96.8	53.8	56.6	86.9	89.5
Music	1	100.0	98.2	0	37.1	60.0	79.5
Other social studies	11	100.0	97.4	27.3	42.5	74.5	81.6
Physics	10	100.0	96.7	50.0	45.3	96.0	82.6
Religious education	2	100.0	99.1	100.0	49.5	110.0	87.4
Sociology	8	100.0	98.5	75.0	45.3	97.5	84.6
Sports/PE studies	12	100.0	97.8	33.3	30.9	85.0	75.4
Business	10	100.0	91.6	50.0	24.1	88.0	67.9
Information technology VQ	2	100.0	88.3	0	26.9	80.0	67.8
Leisure and recreation	1	100.0	90.7	0	18.3	60.0	64.6
Travel and tourism	1	100.0	90.1	100.0	19.6	120.0	64.9

**ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

English was inspected in detail. French and German are offered at A-level, but were not inspected.

**English**

Provision in English is **very good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average.
- Students show considerable independence in their learning.
- Teaching is dynamic and very well targeted.

### **Commentary**

168. Standards in the examination at A-level have been above average for the last two years; in 2002, they were well above average. The proportion of higher grades is at the national average. At AS level, standards have been well above average for the last four years. Those seen during the inspection indicate that they are now well above average overall for both years. Boys reach the same levels as girls, although girls outnumber boys in the subject.
169. Students speak and write perceptively. The more able students make insightful judgements, analysing and synthesising in a sophisticated manner. They write in a mature and assured style, making very good use of different critical views. They research independently. In Year 12, the more able students were seen already writing at a high A-level standard. They understand literary techniques and comment maturely on them.
170. Students achieve very well. They enter the sixth form with well above average standards, and maintain these throughout the course.
171. Teaching and learning are very good. Excellent lessons were seen on Dr Faustus by Marlowe and on the literature of the First World War. Teachers use computers superbly to enhance their teaching, and students annotate their handouts appropriately. Some of the lessons were at the level of first-year undergraduates.
172. Students learn to discuss at a very high level. In commenting on drama, they show a good focus on how it engages the audience. They have a clear understanding of the social and historical contexts in which literature of different ages was written. During the inspection, very good presentations were given by students on the roles and place of women in the First World War and of poems by William Blake and Carol Ann Duffy. Perceptive analyses result from stimulating and challenging lessons. Students are empowered to take responsibility for their own learning: wide reading and research are promoted well.
173. The faculty is extremely well led and very well managed. An introductory booklet clearly sets out how students can prepare for and embark on the course. Students' work is carefully assessed, with pointers on how to improve.
174. Since the last inspection, the standards overall have risen; students discuss literature in an even more mature way and the greater majority reach higher grades. Overall improvement since the last inspection is very good.

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

175. The standards of language and literacy across the curriculum are very good. In biology, they are outstanding. In history, chemistry and physics, students write very well; in art they analyse known artists' work shrewdly; and in psychology, their essays are very well constructed because they are taught to use linking phrases through high-level writing frames. Thus students can consolidate the knowledge which they acquired at GCSE in English.

### **MATHEMATICS**

The focus was on A-level mathematics. A further mathematics lesson was sampled in Year 12. This class included two students from the neighbouring Hardenhuish School. New material, on parametric equations, was covered with expertise by the teacher, enabling students to achieve well and with enjoyment. In 2004, four students took further mathematics at A-level and all achieved pass grades, two at the higher grades of A or B.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and teach well.
- Students value the good teaching and support provided in and out of the classroom, which enables them to achieve well.
- Students are very well prepared for examinations.
- Opportunities for students to hypothesise, predict and explain their reasoning are too limited.
- The learning of mathematical skills and techniques is not enriched enough with real life applications.
- ICT is used well for teaching and learning.

### **Commentary**

176. Attainment on entry to the courses is wide ranging, includes students with high attainment from GCSE but also a few with relatively weaker GCSE grades. An increasing number of students is taking mathematics at AS and A-level and it is one of the more popular subjects in the sixth form. Student retention on courses is very high and students rarely drop out before completion. The very good support and encouragement for students mean that even those who are not particularly gifted mathematicians can attain a mathematics AS or A-level qualification.
177. A-level results in 2003 were in line with the national average overall; boys' results were above average and girls' were below. In 2004, results were also average; girls' results were higher than boys'. Results at A-level in 2004 indicate a mixed picture in terms of students' progress from GCSE; it was generally satisfactory but included some underachievement, usually for very specific individual reasons. Results in AS-level examinations in both 2003 and 2004 were in line with the national average.
178. Standards in the current AS and A-level classes are generally above average. Students are achieving well. This is due to good teaching and also due in part to improvements to the curriculum in the last year. Students' skills in algebraic manipulation and graphical methods, for example, have been well developed in Years 7 to 11, giving students a firm foundation for AS and A-level work. Students can generally tackle the demands of the A-level courses with confidence, such as handling partial fractions and using differential calculus in Year 13, and discrete random variables in Year 12.
179. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers are able mathematicians who convey their own enjoyment and enthusiasm for the subject to students. Course content is covered very thoroughly. Assessment is very good and linked closely to examination requirements. Regular testing enables teachers and students to keep a close check on progress and address swiftly any problems or misunderstandings. In most lessons, the teachers' effective questioning skills are used to check students' understanding. Teaching does not allow, routinely and sufficiently, for students to suggest ideas, hypothesise, predict or explain their thinking or reasoning. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboard in lessons and, in some cases, the lesson presentations are saved and can be accessed by students for future reference. The use of ICT enhances greatly teaching and learning. Some applications of the mathematical topics studied are provided in course text books but learning is not as a rule enriched in other ways for students to learn about how their skills could be used in context, in the world of work or elsewhere. Students work diligently, with concentration and interest. They are encouraged

to attend the weekly mathematics surgery for sixth form students whenever additional help is required; they do so and value this provision. Teachers give willingly of their time to provide this extra support.

180. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers work in very effective partnership. They seek constantly to improve the quality of provision and students' achievements. They embrace curriculum developments and innovations in teaching that can enhance teaching and learning. Accommodation for mathematics is very good; displays are good for students in the main school but there is too little of specific interest for A-level students in terms of their current studies or future careers.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

181. Students' competence in mathematics is very good. Students tackle confidently tasks in other subjects that require skills such as computation, estimation, graphical interpretation and algebraic manipulation. Students in A-level biology and psychology, for example, demonstrate very good skills in their statistical analyses or when calculating experimental error. Problem solving is generally undertaken well in the sixth form. The critical thinking course contributes well to developing students' powers of mathematical reasoning.

## **SCIENCE**

The focus was on biology and physics. One lesson in chemistry was sampled where students were achieving well. A-level results were very high in chemistry in 2004 and in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Almost all of the 11 candidates achieved the highest A-B grades; seven gained the topmost grade.

### **BIOLOGY**

Provision in biology is **very good**.

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- In a climate of high expectation, well above average standards have been achieved through highly skilled teaching and praiseworthy efforts of many students.
- The development of students' skills of analysis and evaluation is very good because experimental method is exceptionally well taught.

## **COMMENTARY**

182. A-level results in 2004 were well above average. More than half the students achieved grades A-B, four gained the top-most grade and all passed the examination. In the previous year, results were high and in the top five per cent nationally. In contrast, the pass rate at AS, in 2004, was lower than in previous years and illustrated pockets of underachievement. However, although a notable number achieved low grades, a third of the group gained grades A-B.
183. Standards in current Year 13 are, overall, above average and achievement is good. Assessments show that, in terms of predictions based upon their work and AS results, all are likely to pass the examination with many attaining higher grades. The progress made is strongly linked to the quality of teaching and students' keenness to learn. They were noticeably engrossed in the topic of selective breeding techniques in humans. Eagerly preparing and defending cases for or against gene therapy, they made excellent progress in strengthening skills of analysis and debate. Their teacher's striking knowledge about human genetics, and thorough planning of the lesson's events, successfully led them to hotly debate

the benefits and hazards and to challenge prejudices. There is scope now for sharpening up these skills earlier into advanced work, and challenging assumptions throughout lessons.

184. Test results and work show that, overall, standards in Year 12 are well above average and achievement is good. Students are successfully moving on from GCSE work into more advanced ideas as they grapple with the complexities of cell membrane structures. The actual rate of progress results from the imaginative way teachers prepare students to confront new ideas. It is also due, in no small measure, to the strength of students' drive to learn. All this was well illustrated during their skilful PowerPoint presentations about the effects of smoking upon gaseous exchange. Students made very good progress in understanding how to distil essential ideas from sources, and to critically evaluate the essence of presentations because of their teacher's perceptive planning.
185. Work is usually highly organised, reflecting a high degree of commitment and diligence from students, thus helping them to reflect upon ideas well when sorting out learning. Completed work in books shows numerous opportunities for extending technical vocabulary, interrogating biological processes and exploiting numeracy. There is competent use of statistical methods in verifying observations of distribution of freshwater shrimps in a stretch of water. The presentation of investigative records is praiseworthy. The very best work, investigating enzyme inhibition, makes hypotheses explicit, conclusions consistent with results and exceptional, penetrating critical evaluations. The need to identify, justify and follow modifications is well understood. Support is thorough in helping those who have difficulty in applying information and are slower at recognising anomalies in results.
186. The quality of teaching and learning is, overall, very good, varying from excellent to good. Students' work shows that marking continues to be as constructive and consistently helpful as at the last inspection. It persistently illustrates the high expectations teachers have of their students and reassures them of what they are capable of understanding. Teachers know well the next steps students need to take to advance their learning; to improve its quality even more. They now need to plan imaginative plenaries, at critical points in lengthy lessons, to help students more clearly 'visualise' an emerging big picture, as they reflect upon ideas. Strong subject expertise is used well in building up ideas about, for instance, genetic control of protein structures and, in explaining away misconceptions students encounter when tackling the biochemistry of respiration. Excellent teaching rigorously causes students to challenge accepted principles through meticulous planning and use of a comprehensive range of website resources. The development of students' skills of analysis and evaluation is very good because scientific method has been very well nurtured. It is a strength of the department.
187. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The department has done well to maintain high standards. Leadership and management are both very good. The co-ordinator has a crystal clear vision and high expectations for future developments in raising standards even further. Performance is meticulously analysed and underachievement quickly spotted. The development plan comprehensively prioritises tasks and is a very good working document. The need to extend analyses of assessment data to identify specific learning targets, for individual students that are rooted in biology, have been identified.

## **Physics**

Provision in physics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good and this leads to good achievement.
- Results are well above average.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards their studies.
- Assessment is very good.

- The large group size in Year 12 is having an adverse effect on practical work.

## **Commentary**

188. The GCSE A-level results for 2004 were well above average and all students achieved a pass. These results were similar to those for 2003, although more students achieved the higher grades than. The AS level results for 2004 were not as good as for 2003 as a few students failed to achieve a pass. The retention rates for physics are very good.
189. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average and these standards are achieved through very good teaching and the very positive attitudes of the students. In comparison with their standards at the start of Year 12, the achievement of students is good. There is no significant difference in the achievement of male and female students. Literacy and numeracy skills are very good in both year groups. Students in Year 13 demonstrated excellent use of ICT when giving PowerPoint presentations on the life cycle of a star. Year 12 students are able to plan and carry out investigations with a high degree of accuracy.
190. Teaching and learning in physics are very good and students are very well motivated and have positive attitudes. Lessons are challenging and the teacher has high expectations. The well-planned lessons have a brisk pace, which maintains the interest of students, and reviews at the end of each lesson help to consolidate learning. Students are encouraged to share ideas and help each other, which works well with the small group size in Year 13 but less so with the large number of students in Year 12, which is also beginning to limit practical work. There is thorough coverage of the examination syllabus and students are provided with many opportunities to practise examination techniques, both theoretical and practical. There are very good working relationships in lessons so students feel able to ask for help and advice if they need it. Opportunities for the development of independent learning skills are provided through project work. Assessment and marking are thorough and informative so students are fully aware of their progress and target grades.
191. The department is well led and managed and there is a commitment to the continued improvement of examination results. The department has benefited from the school's science college status, which has enabled the purchase of mobile laptop computers, interactive whiteboards and additional software. The excellent accommodation and display areas provide a stimulating learning environment for the students. The general resources are very good but the increasing popularity of the subject means that they are becoming stretched in Year 12. The department has very good external links with local industry, and universities, which provide visiting speakers. The North Wiltshire Astronomical Society leads the school's astronomy club and affords the students access to otherwise inaccessible equipment. A team of technicians provides very good support for the department. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The high standards seen then have been maintained, the accommodation has been refurbished, there has been an increase in ICT equipment and there is an increase in uptake of the subject.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

192. No accredited courses are followed in ICT. However, students use ICT well to support their learning. ICT is used particularly well in several subjects, including in English. Interactive whiteboards are used to very good effect by teachers and students, for example, in mathematics and physics and, in addition, PowerPoint presentations are used skilfully in psychology and biology. The use of computer-aided design is strong and enhances the quality of students' work in design and technology. In art a range of technologies is used very well, including digital cameras, and in music computers are freely used to very good effect, including in compositions. There is insufficient use of ICT in physical education. Students make very good use of the Internet in their learning, as seen in biology and in several other subjects for their research.

## HUMANITIES

The main focus was on history and psychology and lessons were sampled in geography, philosophy and ethics and religious education. One lesson was seen in geography where teaching was very good. From a relatively low base, students' achievement in geography is good. Examination results at A-level in geography were average in 2004 and well above in 2003. In lessons seen in philosophy and ethics and religious education, achievement and teaching and learning were very good. In religious education, there have only been four entries over the past two years at A-level but all have been successful at A-B grades.

### History

Provision in history is **good**.

### MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- A-level results were above average in 2004 and students are very well prepared for their examinations.
- Increasing numbers are opting to study at AS and A-level.
- Good, well-informed teaching leads to good achievement.
- Students profit from the very good basis laid earlier in the school in writing skills and handling sources.
- Informative marking of essays helps students improve.

### Commentary

193. Advanced level results were above average in 2004 with four of the 14 Year 13 students attaining A grades. From a small entry of only three students in 2003, all attained A-E and one student a grade A. Retention rates on courses are high. Substantial numbers have opted to study history in Year 12.
194. Current standards in the sixth form are above average in Year 13 and average in Year 12. In both Years 12 and 13, students are achieving well. Most students in the sixth form are particularly adept at handling sources, helped by the very good grounding received in those skills lower in the school. In Year 12 lessons, most reached average standards in written work and were seen making some soundly argued points on the Beveridge Report. They have made satisfactory progression from Year 11 where a number attained fairly modest grades at GCSE. There are two groups in Year 12 with one better than the other in discussion and standards.
195. There are more higher attainers in Year 13 and several are capable of attaining some of the higher grades at A-level helped by their very good writing skills. In Year 13, students are adept in their handling of information, in thinking critically as young historians and coming to well argued conclusions, for example on the driving forces behind Nazi anti-semitic policy. Good subject knowledge and preparation enables teachers to be at ease with the topic taught and to deal with some challenging questions from intelligent students.
196. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Students are particularly well prepared for their examinations. Whilst teachers know their students well and know how much pressure to place on those who feel insecure in answering questions in class, that at times results in a small number of students dominating discussion. Introductory exercises are used very well to set the tone of the lesson. There is a very good balance in lessons between teacher input and opportunities for students to work independently. Events and personalities are captured well through well-devised handouts. In a Year 12 lesson considering the end of British rule in India and problems in giving responsibility for self government in 1945, an excerpt from the film Gandhi was used very well to broaden students' understanding and to add interest. Ongoing

feedback is a strength of lessons. Concise, informative marking of essays, for example, on why particular parties had triumphed or failed in elections, focuses profitably on what students have done well and, equally important, on what they need to do to improve further.

197. Leadership and management are good. As with history in the rest of the school, a very good feature is the way the acting head has managed the problems posed by late changes in staffing near the outset of the academic year. The monitoring of standards is good, helped by the acting head knowing most students very well. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

## **Psychology**

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Inspirational leadership and management are ensuring very effective teaching and learning.
- Excellent assessment and marking results in very good achievement over time.
- Very good teaching with high expectation and challenge encourages very good learning.
- Information technology is used very well to support independent learning and enhance teaching.

## **Commentary**

198. Results at A-level in 2004 were average. This was the first, small, mixed-ability group to take the examination. AS level results were well above the national average.
199. Standards in the current Year 13 are well above the average at A-level. Students have a sound grasp of methodology and psychological perspectives, as well as sound evaluation skills. Written work is of a high standard with relevant detailed use of sources and studies. Less able students have weaker evaluation skills but, with very supportive and helpful teaching, they achieve as well. Year 12 students are above and some well above average at AS level. More able students pick up the terminology and concepts quickly whereas the less able take more time and are held back initially by weaker extended writing skills. Literacy is strengthened over time by the use of writing frames and model answers, as well as frequent and very effective essay structuring exercises. Competence in numeracy is evident in students' working out of statistics.
200. Achievement in Year 13 is very good, and achievement in the current Year 12 is also very good. The retention rate within and across AS and A-Level is good because students are made aware of the demands of the course through a very clear and informative option process in Year 11, which includes taster lessons and preparatory summer holiday reading. A growing number of students progress to study psychology at university level.
201. Teaching and learning are both very good, with some excellent teaching observed. The very good teaching is characterised by confident and comprehensive subject knowledge, high expectation of student effort, and constant challenge, for example, in probing questioning which does not accept the first answer but pushes students to think more deeply and justify their statements. Students respond to this high level of challenge with impressive intellectual effort and motivation, both in their written work and discussion in lessons. A tight, syllabus-driven course and sheer volume of information can result occasionally in some didactic teaching which leads to student passivity, but this is more than outweighed by the variety of strategies which involve students in their own learning.

202. Assessment and marking are excellent and make a tremendous impact on the rapid progress students make. Clear targets and close monitoring of students' work means that every student knows where they are and what to aim for. The very full and helpful marking of students' work is exemplary, because it really shows the students how to improve in detailed annotation. Self and paired assessment is used frequently in lessons and this enables students to play a strong part in making and recognising improvement in their own work.
203. Leadership and management are both excellent. Leadership is inspirational, with a clear vision, enthusiasm and commitment to the highest standards. Staff are well supported, good practice is shared and valuable Inset training keeps the department right up to date. Future planning is taking due account of the growing demand for places on the course, with its implications for resources, as well as continuing to set even higher targets for the percentage of students achieving their target grade. The influence of the excellent practice in this department is felt throughout the sixth form. The advantages of using ICT to support private study and research skills are fully embraced, evident in the very effective use of PowerPoint presentations, the interactive whiteboard, and the shared resource area for students and teachers.
204. The subject makes a good contribution to the personal development of the students through a growing self-knowledge and the study of human behaviour and motivation. Further enrichment comes from visits to conferences and several lectures given by a well-known professor of psychology and textbook author.
205. There is no judgement on improvement, as this subject was not reported on at the last inspection.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- AS and A-Level results in product design and food technology are above average.
- Student achievement is very good because of very high quality teaching.
- There are very high standards of designing and creative thinking.
- The head of department has excellent clarity of vision for developing design education.
- There are very good industrial links at the heart of students' learning.
- The effective use of ICT contributes well to the very high standards of designing.

#### **Commentary**

206. Product design and food technology are two subjects both offered at AS and A-levels. Food technology group sizes are currently relatively small, but growing.
207. Results in 2003 were well above average and in 2004 above average. Achievement is very good in all courses based on students' standards at the start of the courses. There are some very high quality examples of students' coursework, for example, where students have been able to work alongside architects in the Calne development project and design models to exacting standards. In food technology, students have a good knowledge of nutrition and apply this to develop a range of high quality food products.
208. The quality of teaching and learning is very good with some excellent practice. The excellent lessons are outstanding and are a lively and stimulating combination of high expectations,

excellent use of probing question and answer sessions and expert subject knowledge. Computer-aided design is used effectively. Students benefit from individual attention from their teachers, who provide very good tutoring on how to develop and improve their project work. This results in a significant majority of AS students continuing at A-level.

209. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has excellent vision and negotiates a clear way forward with a very cohesive team of teachers. Very good systems are in place so that the head of department can monitor the teaching and learning and, as a result, use this information to inform development planning. Regular teaching team meetings focus on evaluating the design and technology sixth form courses and reviewing students' individual performance. Excellent industrial links form the basis of most activities and are the key to attaining such high levels of achievement.
210. Improvement since the last inspection is very good, in particular, the additional provision for food technology.

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

The main focus was on art and design. Lessons were sampled in music, drama and media studies. In one lesson seen in music, standards were above average and teaching, learning and achievement were good. In music, students compose at a very high standard and performance skills are very good in singing and instrument playing. At A-level in music, with small numbers in the past two years, all have attained grades A-E. Standards seen in drama were very high and achievement was excellent. In drama, students were seen producing superb performances of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *The Importance of Being Ernest*. A-level results in drama were above average in 2004 and well above in 2003. In media studies, standards seen were above average overall and teaching and learning were good.

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Achievement is very good from the start of Year 12 to Year 13.
- Results at A-level in 2004 were well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good at this level.
- Formal assessing, recording and tracking systems are used to good effect.
- Provision of ICT is very good.

#### **COMMENTARY**

211. Attainment was above the national average in the GCE AS level examination in both 2003 and 2004, and well above the national average at A-level in both years. Attainment by boys was well above that of girls in 2004.
212. Students make very good progress throughout Year 12. They work with great concentration. Standards are well above average. Students have the self-confidence to make use of their own ideas and concepts as starting points for investigation and exploration. They are currently making very good use of a wide range of secondary source material, which is carefully stored in their visual diaries in preparation for their AS level examination. These students are very keen to discuss their work, are highly articulate and communicate their intentions with great clarity. Students in Year 13 in their A-level studies are working with great determination and sense of purpose to develop their ideas, concepts, attitudes and beliefs through drawing, painting and the manipulation of images through the use of ICT. Many of these students demonstrate the capacity for working with great independence. Current standards in Year 13 are well above average. Achievement from the start of Year 12 to Year 13 is very good.

213. Teaching and learning are very good within Years 12 and 13. Teachers are very well informed and very familiar with the requirements of the GCE AS and A-level examinations. They are therefore in a very good position to provide informed advice and support for students. On a regular basis, they engage students in discussion about their work and progress made. All students in the groups are involved in this discussion, which is intended to help them develop and refine their critical faculties. Students follow a very broad curriculum at this level and many are making very good use of digital cameras, computers, scanners and printers in the generation of exciting and very personal visual imagery in response to examination questions.
214. Leadership and management are very good. The head of subject has a very clear vision of how he would like to see the department develop at this level. Assessment of work is carried out thoroughly and accurate records kept which enables staff to provide detailed and relevant feedback to individual students on a regular basis. The head of subject actively encourages students to extend their range of technical skills beyond the traditional preoccupations of drawing and painting to include skills in the use of digital cameras and computers in the communication of ideas and expression of feelings.
215. Accommodation is very good. In addition to the three multi-purpose studios, students have access to a smaller studio that is set aside exclusively for their use. There is also a small ICT suite of six computers, scanners and printers where they can work independently. Resources are very good, and students have access to a very wide range of ICT resources. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

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

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Excellent leadership and management effectively ensure that students are ready for their next stage of education, and encourages the 'sport for life' philosophy.
- AS and A-level results are consistently well above average and students achieve very well.
- There is a very good range of opportunities for students to fulfil their ambitions and interests.

### **Commentary**

216. AS and A-level results have consistently been well above average. Current standards reached by the majority of students in Year 13 are well above average, and they are achieving very well. They have a very good grasp of the modules covered so far. They use their general knowledge and technical language well to reason logically through theoretical aspects. Note taking is of a very good quality and written work shows good independent research. They are able to research and design effective revision resources for themselves and each other. Numeracy skills are well developed, showing a good understanding in the use of formulae in physiology. The students following the AS course are mature young adults and show high levels of interest in their subject. They are able to use their knowledge of skill acquisition and anatomy to improve their performance in their chosen activities. Standards reached in extra-curricular activities are above average. A number of students represent the county and country in a range of activities, such as rugby, cricket, horse riding and football.
217. The very good recreational programme of activities for all students is popular. Good standards are reached in traditional games and many students enjoy a variety of activities, such as yoga.

There are also off-site activities using local facilities that enable students to follow their own interests.

218. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are very good. The teachers effectively challenge the students intellectually and physically. They use their subject expertise to plan well, setting a range of tasks to develop skills such as independent research, presentation techniques, teaching their fellow students and note taking. Information and communication technology skills are not as well developed. Homework assignments are planned effectively to engage all levels of attainment within the class. Target setting is rigorous, reviewed regularly and increases expectations in relation to students' ability. Students are very appreciative of the support that is given by the teachers and enjoy the challenge of the courses and activity programme. They regularly organise clubs and events for younger students and use their well-developed skills to improve standards.
219. Leadership of the department is excellent. Since the previous inspection, AS and A-level and have been introduced and the students gain consistently very good results. A strong mutual respect exists between teachers and students that leads to an enjoyable and challenging environment. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

## **BUSINESS**

The main focus was on business studies. In the economics class sampled, standards were average and achievement satisfactory. A-level results were well below average in 2004, following average results in 2003.

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff teaching business have extensive commercial experience which they use to motivate and enthuse students.
- Course and lesson planning is very thorough, which contributes to good achievement.
- Although learning opportunities are well designed to meet examination requirements, they could be more challenging.
- Excellent use is made of educational visits to emphasise vocational aspects of the course.
- Some accommodation is not adequate to enable a wider range of teaching approaches.

### **Commentary**

220. Business studies is a fairly recently established provision at the school. Almost all students taking AVCE business in the sixth form start their course without prior study of business. Their overall GCSE grades are slightly above average for students taking this course but they make good progress, as shown by the well above average results at A-level in 2004. Evidence of good value added is also shown in the above average module results of students in Years 12 and 13. Retention rates are excellent and student achievement is, therefore, good.
221. Students in Year 13 in reaching above average standards show a good understanding of business concepts and the ability to apply them to real work situations. They are able to produce promotional strategies, including the appropriate use of business terminology and an understanding of how one set of business decisions impact on other aspects of business

performance. In Year 12, students make rapid progress. They have recently undertaken an educational visit to the Jaguar car plant and this enables them to have a much better understanding of modern approaches to quality assurance. They are able to use business concepts confidently, although their critical understanding is, as would be expected at this stage, less well developed. Year 13 students have achieved good results in their finance module, which students often find particularly difficult. They are confident and enthusiastic about the subject and the majority plan to continue related courses in higher education.

222. The good progress that students make is a direct result of good teaching and learning. Excellent use is made of industrial visits and the learning from these experiences is integrated well into student assignments. Business teachers have excellent commercial experience and they use this to make learning of business concepts as realistic as possible. Some internally produced teaching materials are better than commercially available alternatives. The teaching of different marketing and human resource concepts is also confident and self-assured. All staff teaching the subject are enthusiastic and supportive and these strengths are highly valued by students. Teaching could, however, be further improved by a greater focus on the development of the wider range of skills that are required to achieve top grades and to succeed in higher education. Students are not always encouraged to think critically enough about business concepts. Teachers sometimes focus on examination requirements to the neglect of more extended challenges but, at the time of the inspection, with examinations imminent, that was understandable.
223. Leadership and management of the business section are good. An excellent start has been made in establishing business provision. Planning is thorough and good resources are being developed and acquired. Assessment to aid learning is examination dominated and formal feedback to students on reports tends to be rather bland. Not enough attention is paid to reporting on the progress that students make in developing the skills required for success in business.
224. Accommodation is not satisfactory. Teaching takes place in two rooms. One is very suitable with easy access to computers and other business resources. Other classes are taught in a cramped, inappropriate and non-specialist room. Better facilities are needed if provision is to expand.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

In a very good and very well organised Year 12 lesson sampled, students demonstrated a good deal of detailed research and understanding of the impact of the new *Every Child Matters* legislation on the provision of children's services. Students were achieving very well and attaining above-average standards.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

225. The very successful general studies programme helps in maintaining the broad programme of education and makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Thirty four students have been entered for AS general studies in each of the last two years in Year 13. Results were high in relation to national averages in 2004 and in the top five per cent of schools nationally, with over half the entrants attaining A-B grades and results at grade A also being well above average. These improved on the above average results of 2003. General studies lessons were suspended during the week of the inspection for a vaccination programme and could not be sampled. Weekly discussion groups in tutorial time on common themes add further to students' general education. The critical thinking course, offered in Year 13 and leading to an AS examination, is another example of a worthwhile broadening of provision.
226. A wide range of sporting and leisure activities is offered to the sixth form using school and community facilities. It is unusual for such activities to be compulsory in the sixth form but the physical health and welfare of students benefit from that decision.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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