

# INSPECTION REPORT

**SHEREDES SCHOOL**

**Hoddesdon**

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117538

Headteacher: Mr Robert Robson

Lead inspector: Felicity Golding

Dates of inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> February - 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2005

Inspection number: 268909

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:	Other secondary school
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	925
School address:	Cock Lane Hoddesdon Hertfordshire
Postcode:	EN11 8JY
Telephone number:	(01992) 410 800
Fax number:	(01992) 410 801
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Date of previous inspection:	1 <sup>st</sup> February 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Sheredes is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school of about average size. The number on roll is 925, of which 81 are in the sixth form. This is an increase of 172 pupils since the last inspection. The school is situated in Hoddesdon, which is in the Borough of Broxbourne, in south east Hertfordshire. The school draws pupils from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds in Hertfordshire and Essex. Just over a third of pupils attending the school come from Hoddesdon. The socio-economic circumstance of students reflects a whole range of family circumstances, but overall is below average. There are 100 pupils with special educational needs, including eight who hold statements of special educational need. This is just below average. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about average. The ethnic background of the pupils is predominantly white British. There are no pupils for whom English is not their first language. The full ability range is represented in the school. However, the proportion of pupils with average and below average levels of attainment who enter is higher than in most schools, and there are fewer above average pupils. In the last few years, the school has received a high number of pupils who join the school after the normal time of entry.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
5944	Felicity Golding	Lead inspector	Citizenship
13874	Jane Chesterfield	Lay inspector	
2643	Kevin Haddock	Team inspector	History Post-16 Sociology Post-16 History Sixth Form
11548	David Lee	Team inspector	Mathematics Post-16 Mathematics
11526	Mike Hodgkinson	Team inspector	Physical Education Post-16 Physical education Post-16 Business education
35090	Chris Snudden	Team inspector	English Post-16 English Post-16 Drama Post-16 Media studies
31385	Neil Gillespie	Team inspector	Science Post-16 Biology Post-16 Chemistry
33013	David Richardson	Team inspector	Geography Post-16 Geography
2048	Doug Masterton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Post-16 Information and communication technology
31112	Mike Simm	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31704	David O'Neale	Team inspector	Music
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education
18261	Tony Hill	Team inspector	Art and design Post-16 Art and design Special educational needs
2971	Kathleen Hooper	Team inspector	Design and technology Post-16 Design and technology

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 PUPILS</b>	<b>8 - 13</b>
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>13 - 21</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>21 - 24</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	<b>24 - 25</b>
Work-related learning	
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>26 - 57</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>58</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides an acceptable standard of education and has numerous strengths. It has a caring and inclusive ethos and provides a very wide range of learning opportunities. The school has serious weaknesses because too much of the teaching is unsatisfactory and pupils do not achieve as well as they should, especially in mathematics and science. Boys do not achieve as well as girls, particularly in their writing. **Sixth form provision is satisfactory.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership and management are sound.
- The school's ethos is sound and inclusion is good.
- Parents are satisfied with the school.
- Pupils like the school, especially those who stay into the sixth form.
- Standards of achievement in mathematics are unsatisfactory and in Years 10 and 11 in English, science, information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, and religious education (RE).
- Teaching is unsatisfactory overall but in performing arts, art and design, and physical education it is good throughout the school.
- Pupils' skills in literacy are not high enough.
- The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- Value for money is satisfactory.
- Overall effectiveness is satisfactory.

The school has made unsatisfactory progress since its most recent inspection in 1999. Achievement is about the same, the quality of teaching has fallen slightly and the curriculum has improved. There has been limited progress with provision and achievement in information and communication technology. Assessment data is better managed but teachers do not use this information well to plan to build on pupils' earlier achievements.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	D	E	E
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E	E	E	

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

**Attainment is below average.** Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with attainment levels below average when compared with other pupils of the same age. Standards of achievement by the end of Year 9 are satisfactory overall, although they are unsatisfactory in mathematics, writing, ICT, design and technology, and RE. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 11 is unsatisfactory and in several other subjects, including ICT. The more able pupils and most boys underachieve. In the sixth form, standards are satisfactory and achievement is good.

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is sound. Their attitudes to one another and to staff are friendly and sociable, and behaviour is satisfactory. Attendance was below average in 2004.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Although a great proportion of the teaching is at least sound and some teaching is of a very high standard, there are too many weaker lessons in the main school, so **teaching is unsatisfactory overall. In the sixth, form teaching is good.** The quality of learning matches the teaching. Pupils learn best when they are given clear guidance about how to improve their work and there are high expectations about what they can achieve. Weaker lessons did not provide these. The low levels of literacy of many pupils when they start at the school make learning difficult.

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils and the work-related programme offered to pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. There are very many extra-curricular activities across a wide range of subjects, which are very well supported and enrich pupils' experience. The curriculum in the sixth form is limited due to its small size and pupils would like to have a wider choice of subjects. The care, support and guidance offered to pupils and the links with parents are satisfactory. The school makes good links with local businesses and the wider community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. This is because, despite lower than expected achievement, the recently established senior team, under the clear direction of the headteacher, has accurately identified what needs to be done. It has begun to implement a plan to improve teaching and to raise standards but developments have been too recent to show a positive impact yet. There is variability in the effectiveness of subject leaders. The governance of the school is satisfactory.

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

Parents are satisfied with the school. They are pleased with pastoral care and induction, and with what the physical education and performing arts departments have to offer. They have concerns about the behaviour of some pupils and the variations in the quality of teaching, especially in the departments where there has been a high turnover of staff. Pupils like the school for the most part and feel well supported by staff. They feel the same as their parents about teaching and behaviour. Sixth formers enjoy being at the school and feel relationships between staff and students are good. However, many feel that the choice of courses available to them is too limited.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Address the underachievement across the school, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science with particular emphasis on the underachievement of boys.
- Improve attendance.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring teachers have appropriately high expectations through the effective use of information about pupils' performance.
- Embed more systematic approaches to management across the school, including monitoring and evaluation.
- Develop pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum.
- Address inconsistencies in marking and feedback for pupils;

**and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- Develop ICT across the curriculum.

- Ensure reports and the school prospectus contain statutory information.
- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT THE SHEREDES SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory.** It has made sound progress since the last inspection and provides satisfactory value for money. Many sixth formers at Sheredes have lower than average GCSE grades on entry, but the school helps them to succeed. The teaching is good and students have very positive attitudes and achieve well. They play a full part in the life of the school and provide very good role models for younger pupils.

Considering its size, the school offers a good range of traditional courses with some additional options such as media studies, business, leisure and tourism and BTEC dance and performing arts. Students' choices are nevertheless constrained to some extent. There is a good range of sports and other activities.

#### The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Sixth form students make good progress and achieve well.
- Students achieve particularly well in art and design, drama, history, media studies and music.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Curriculum choices are restricted and do not always meet students' needs.

### 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	Provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . Standards are in line with expectations for the course. Achievement and teaching are satisfactory.
Mathematics	Provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . Standards are satisfactory and teaching and learning are good.
Science	Provision is <b>good</b> . Standards in biology and chemistry are satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good.
Information and communication technology	Provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . Students are well supported and achieve in line with expectations for the course. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Humanities	Provision is <b>good</b> : in geography, it is satisfactory, in sociology, it is good and in history, it is very good. Teaching and learning are very good in history, good in sociology and satisfactory in geography.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision is <b>very good</b> . Standards are very good in art and design, drama and media studies. Teaching and learning are of a high standard.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in physical education is <b>good</b> . Standards in examination groups are good. Students enjoy the recreational opportunities provided.
Business	Provision is <b>good</b> . Standards are good and students make



good progress due to very good teaching.

---

*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'.*

Design and technology, media studies, music and dance were sampled during the inspection. Standards of achievement are very good in art and design, drama, history, media studies and music. Students do well in business studies, science, sociology and physical education. Achievement is satisfactory in the remaining subjects. There are no significant gender differences.

#### **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

**Advice, guidance and support are good.** Induction arrangements for students joining the sixth form are good. Given the small numbers in many of the teaching groups, teachers are able to monitor students' progress well and students know that they can always discuss any problems they have. Advice on further opportunities in higher education and employment is not sufficiently strong, however. Sixth formers are encouraged to take on responsibility within the school.

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

Leadership and management are satisfactory, with particular strengths in promoting a positive ethos among the students and responding to their pastoral needs. Sixth formers are given a high profile within the school and are valued as influential role models for younger pupils. Importance is attached to organising events which enrich the life of the sixth form considerably. The head of sixth form is well supported in this by the team of tutors. The arrangements for monitoring the academic progress of students and providing guidance on further opportunities in education and employment are not sufficiently developed, however. The head of sixth form also has little opportunity to monitor the quality of the education received by sixth formers, given other pressures on her time. Subject leadership in the sixth form is always at least satisfactory and is often good or very good.

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

Sixth formers like being at Sheredes and find the teaching challenging and demanding. They feel that their work is assessed helpfully and that their teachers help them to develop the skills needed for more advanced study. A significant number of students consider that the range of courses does not meet their needs and interests, however, and this is justified, bearing in mind the limited range of courses that can be offered in a sixth form of this size.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Overall, standards are below average in Year 9 and in Year 11. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their attainment is below average compared to others of the same age. During their time in Years 7 to 9, they make sound progress and achievement is satisfactory overall, although it is unsatisfactory in a number of key subjects. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is unsatisfactory overall. Standards are in line with what is expected in the sixth form and achievement is good.

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

- There is significant underachievement among boys.
- The achievement of gifted pupils and pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
- Standards in English and mathematics in Years 7 to 11 and in science in Years 10 and 11 are below national expectations.
- Standards in music and drama are above average in Years 7 to 11.
- There is undue variability in standards across the full range of subjects.
- Competence in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is unsatisfactory; consequently, there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection.
- Achievement in the sixth form is often good, with particular strengths in art and design, drama, history, media studies and music.

#### **Commentary**

1. Pupils join the school in Year 7 with below average standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science. There is relatively little ethnic diversity and there are no pupils for whom English is not their first language. The number of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average. The socio-economic backgrounds from which pupils are drawn are variable, but relatively disadvantaged, taken as a whole. A particular feature of the school is the high level of pupil mobility with pupils joining or leaving at other than the usual times. In last year's Year 11, for example, this was more than three times the national average.
2. The 2003 test results of pupils at the age of 14 were in line with national averages overall. They were most positive in English, especially when value added indicators are taken into account; higher attaining pupils did well in this subject. Results in mathematics and science were less good, however, particularly in the case of the higher attaining pupils in mathematics. In all three subjects, boys did less well than girls to a greater degree than is usually found. Taking the years 2001-2003 into account, the results of pupils aged 14 improved at a faster rate of progress than the national trend.
3. The most recent results in 2004 appear less positive than those in the previous year, but had not been confirmed officially at the time of the inspection, thus making it difficult to draw firm conclusions. Results in mathematics and science seem to be broadly similar to those in 2003 while those in English are less positive. The school failed to achieve its targets in English and mathematics. As in 2003, there are issues about the underachievement of higher attaining pupils and boys generally.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.1 (31.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	33.6 (32.0)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.4 (31.2)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 177 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- GCSE results have fluctuated significantly over the last five years with a peak having been reached in 2002 when the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C grades came within two per cent of the national average. Since then, the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A\*-G grades has been significantly below the national average. Overall, the school's trend in GCSE results has remained static while the national trend has risen.
- In 2004, compared to 2003, there was a significant decline in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A\* to C to 29 per cent, which was well below the national average and well below results in similar schools, taking value-added into account. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A\*-G grades was also well below the national average. The school failed to meet its targets. Boys did significantly less well than girls. Pupils performed relatively well in English Literature, drama, geography and physical education and less well in subjects such as English Language, mathematics and science.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	29 (42)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	73 (74)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	91 (91)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	29.7 (35.0)	41.4 (40.6)

*There were 143 pupils in the year group, 75 boys and 68 girls. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- The standards of work seen currently in Year 9 are below national expectations in many subjects. Taking their attainment on entry into account, however, pupils make satisfactory progress or better in the majority of subjects. This is particularly the case where teachers have good specialist knowledge and bring enthusiasm and a sense of purpose to their lessons. These qualities are most evident in Year 9 though, as in English and mathematics, this does not always make it possible for pupils to retrieve the ground lost earlier in Years 7 and 8. Standards are above average in music and drama and in line with expectations in science, history, French, physical education and citizenship. They are below average in English, mathematics, art and design, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology, and religious education.
- In Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve very well in music and drama and do well in physical education and art and design. Achievement is satisfactory in French, science, geography, history and citizenship. It is unsatisfactory in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, design and technology, and religious education. Pupils' achievements in a number of special activities, such as the Sheredes Project and Musical Futures, both seen in

Year 9 during the inspection, are very good or excellent. They show what might be achieved more widely, given more consistent quality of provision.

8. In Years 10 and 11, standards are below average overall and achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards are well above average in drama and music, above average in physical education and in line with what is expected in French, geography, history and citizenship. They are below average in all other subjects, except in mathematics, where they are well below. Achievement is very good in music and drama, good in physical education and satisfactory in art and design, geography, history and citizenship. It is unsatisfactory in the remaining subjects and poor in mathematics. Evidence from the inspection shows that particular effort is being made to help Year 11 pupils to prepare for GCSE examinations this year and there are signs that results should improve significantly on those achieved in 2004.
9. A key factor in the underachievement of many pupils is the school's unsatisfactory use of data to provide adequate information about how pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils entering the school come from a very large number of primary schools, including a significant proportion from schools outside the county. For too long, there is a lack of clarity about the prior attainment of many pupils and this is further exacerbated by a lack of adequate information about the relatively large numbers who join at various times after Year 7. This makes it very difficult for teachers to set appropriately challenging targets and to monitor progress so that underachievement often occurs. Significant steps are now being taken to establish systems to ensure that teachers are better informed about pupils' attainment and progress, but this has yet to make an impact.
10. The school makes unsatisfactory provision for the development of pupils' literacy skills, especially in writing. Standards in literacy are below average in Years 7 to 11. Standards in numeracy across the curriculum are also below average, but are adequate for pupils' needs in the subjects where they are usually required. Competence in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory for the most part and has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection.

### **Sixth form**

11. Standards in the sixth form are satisfactory and there has been sound progress since the last inspection. Numbers remain small, however, and comparisons between one year and another are difficult to make, especially in those subjects where there are very few students. In 2004, 40 students were entered for GCE A2 examinations with 87 per cent of their entries gaining A to E grades. Compared with other schools, the results achieved in 2004 were well below the national average, but can be viewed more positively if the prior attainment of the students is taken into account.
12. The school has an open access policy to students joining the sixth form and welcomes entrants from other schools. Many sixth formers at Sheredes have lower than average GCSE grades on entry, but the school believes that it can nurture them and enable them to succeed. Teaching is good or very good in the majority of subjects with the result that achievement is often good and students have very positive attitudes. Teachers provide very good support and encouragement for individuals so that both higher attaining students and those with special educational needs are able to fulfil their potential.
13. Currently, there are particular strengths in students' achievements in art and design, drama, history, media studies and music and students also do well in business studies, science and sociology. Achievement is satisfactory in the remaining subjects. During the inspection, students' achievements were good or very good in two-thirds of the lessons seen. The numbers of boys and girls are roughly equal in the sixth form and there are no significant achievement issues with regard to gender.

### **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	86.6 (87.9)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	22.4 (23.2)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	195.8 (157.2)	265.2 (258.2)

*There were 40 pupils in the year group, 17 boys and 23 girls. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. A vigorous application of a new behaviour policy led initially to a high level of short-term exclusions but these are reducing and general behaviour is now much better. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and a high proportion of pupils participate voluntarily in school extra-curricular events. Attendance and punctuality remain unsatisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory in the main school.
- There is a high level of participation in the many sports and arts activities offered by the school.
- Pupils respond well to the opportunities for leadership and the contribution made by the sixth form is highly valued.
- General behaviour around the school is now satisfactory following the rigorous application of a new behaviour policy.
- Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are limited.

### **Commentary**

#### **Attendance**

#### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003 - 2004**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.0	School data	1.9
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.*

Attendance and punctuality are both unsatisfactory.

- There has been good improvement in attendance this year, thanks to the hard work of the school.
14. The school has been successful in raising attendance significantly from the poor levels of the last school year. Its increased efforts to chase up absence and encourage better attendance are already having an impact. The role of the attendance worker has been particularly helpful in supporting families and offering incentives to pupils. Many pupils attend regularly and punctually, but in all year groups there is a core of persistent absentees and latecomers,

especially in Year 10. Often, these pupils have other pastoral problems, and all these factors combine to slow down their progress.

15. Pupils attending Sheredes School have considerable energy and enthusiasm. It is sometimes a challenge for the school and its staff to channel this energy into a desire to learn, a willingness to play a full part in the life of the school and to behave well. In responding to pupils' needs, the school has developed an impressive range of additional activities in all areas but particularly in the field of the expressive arts and in sport. A house system multiplies the number of events and activities in which pupils can participate. No fewer than 49 per cent of all pupils at some time in the year are involved in some kind of extra-curricular sporting activity and, during the inspection, over one hundred pupils were involved in the Broxbourne music festival.
16. Poor behaviour has previously been a difficulty for the school, disrupting pupils' education and frustrating the efforts of teaching staff. The behaviour policy now used is consistently implemented by school staff and fully understood by pupils. Stemming from measures to develop positive behaviour, it includes a careful sequence of escalation from classroom methods, through regular reporting and including exclusion when unfortunately it becomes necessary. Changing the culture of generally poor behaviour in the school initially required very high levels of temporary exclusion but the incidence of exclusion is now reducing and involving fewer pupils.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	793	143	3
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	35	3	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	7	11	1
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	4	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	1	0
Chinese	1	1	0
Any other ethnic group	4	1	0

Parent/pupil preferred not to say	39	18	0
Information not obtained	19	32	4

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

17. Behaviour in and around the school is now satisfactory with little vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Pupils recognise that progress has been made. There is still some misbehaviour in those classrooms where teachers are not fully effective but in the majority of lessons, where pupils are well taught, they behave properly and their energy fuels their learning.
18. Pupils have confidence in their school. Although concerned about bullying, they know that they can turn to an adult and that issues will be dealt with properly. Any pupil who is a victim of bullying is supported. Perpetrators are both supported and punished if appropriate and pupils reported that situations had been resolved. Pupils are willing to take responsibility in the leadership associated with team events and also in the year group forums and the school council. Relationships between pupils and with staff are good and the school works hard to promote equality of opportunity and racial harmony.
19. The work of form tutors, the content of assemblies and the programme of personal, health and social education enables pupils to learn not only what is right and what is wrong but to develop socially and to respond from a personal choice to the needs of others. Pupils work together to support charities and raise considerable amounts of money. Potentially disaffected or vulnerable pupils are well supported and helped to dialogue with the adult community, including the police, whose community officers make a valued contribution to the social education programme. While pupils do meet aspects of multiculturalism through subjects such as technology and English, more could be done to improve their awareness of and respect for the ethnic diversity of Britain today. Pupils are also not given enough opportunities to develop their spiritual awareness with the chance to reflect on the nature of their existence. This is in part due to difficulty with securing specialist teaching for religious education but it also stems from individual subjects not sufficiently broadening pupils' awareness of their world with its cultural and scientific heritage. Through art and design teaching, pupils are confronted with representations of beauty and visions of the environment but other subjects, too, should do more to open pupils' minds.
20. The behaviour of pupils with special educational needs in the Student Support Centre is very good and pupils are very positive about the support they receive and the progress they are making. Where special educational needs pupils are not supported in mainstream lessons, their behaviour is sometimes unsatisfactory and the progress of others is slowed down. Where class teachers are aware of special educational needs pupils, they are able to adapt resources for them. Special educational needs pupils are positive and achieve at least as well as others in their classes.

### **Sixth form**

21. Students in the sixth form are providing very good role models for younger pupils and in so doing are growing in their maturity and confidence. They present a smart image of a more adult status in the school and are very visible to younger pupils with a clearly implied message that study at school is worthwhile.
22. A considerable strength of the sixth form is the voluntary contribution that is made to serve the needs of the school and younger pupils. Students volunteer to assist with supervision on the corridors and with swimming activities. Many act as mentors to younger pupils and assist with their reading development. It not just the younger pupils who benefit. Sixth form attitudes are very good. Students do not seek to isolate themselves from the main community and they play a full part in the life of the school.
23. Attendance and punctuality are both satisfactory.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

24. The school provides an acceptable standard of education. It provides a wide range of learning opportunities with extensive extra-curricular activities, which are popular with its pupils and students. There are weaknesses in some of the teaching across the main school, most notably in mathematics. Pupils engage with most of their learning but are often unsure how to improve their work because the marking and feedback does not give them sufficient guidance. Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for in the Student Support Centre. Arrangements for care, welfare and support of pupils are satisfactory and there are good links with the community.

### Teaching and learning

25. Although many lessons are sound and over half are good, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. This is because too many lessons observed in the main school had shortcomings and this led to insufficient progress and standards of achievement that are not high enough. The best teaching is in the sixth form and consequently, students make good progress and achieve well. The use of assessment is unsatisfactory because, despite full data now being available, too many staff lack the understanding about what the information is telling the school and how to use the findings to raise standards. Therefore, many teachers are unable to set appropriately high expectations for their pupils and to monitor their progress rigorously.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good.
- A few subjects have consistently good teaching and pupils make rapid progress.
- In many lessons, teachers manage behaviour well and use their subject knowledge effectively.
- Over half the lessons seen were good or better.
- The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 11 is too high and there are some key areas for improvement in the teaching of mathematics, ICT and design and technology.
- Teachers do not plan activities that challenge all pupils sufficiently.
- The use of assessment to make accurate judgements on achievement, set targets for improvement and monitor progress against expectations is underdeveloped.
- The proportion of very good or excellent lessons is low.

### Commentary

26. During the week of the inspection, there was a difference between the quality of the teaching observed for students in the sixth form and for pupils in the main school. In the main school, about one in every nine lessons was unsatisfactory and less than half were good or better. Consequently, the teaching is unsatisfactory overall. This is a decline in the quality of teaching seen at the time of the last inspection. In the sixth form, teaching is good overall as there were no unsatisfactory lessons seen and nearly three-quarters of lessons were good.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 128 lessons in main school and sixth form**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (3.9%)	23 (18%)	38 (29.6%)	51 (39.8%)	7 (5.4%)	4 (3.1%)	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.*



27. There is effective teaching in almost all subject areas. There is consistently good teaching in art and design and physical education in all years. There is very good teaching in the performing arts, including music, drama and dance, throughout the school. In the sixth form, teaching is very good in business studies, media studies and history. Despite these examples of high quality teaching, there are concerns about the quality of some teaching which the school has already identified. This is for a variety of reasons, some of which have been beyond the immediate control of the school. For example, difficulties in recruiting teachers to some subject areas and long-term illnesses have led to the need to employ temporary staff. This means some pupils are experiencing a lack of stable contact with teachers in particular curriculum areas, especially in mathematics. As a result, this has led to an inconsistent approach in some areas of the school and has a negative impact on the progress pupils make and the standards they achieve. However, the school has worked hard to overcome these issues and has, this year, set up an innovative coaching programme to develop teachers' skills with the support from the LEA of a seconded deputy headteacher. This is helping a range of teachers, including new and overseas-trained teachers, to consolidate their lesson planning, questioning skills and behaviour management strategies. Some issues raised at the time of the last inspection remain, for example, ICT and religious education, but the strengths identified also continue, for example, in history, physical education, art and design, and drama. Teaching has improved in science, geography and music. It has declined in mathematics and English.
28. Teaching is at its best when teachers' command of their subject and confidence in classroom management enables them to plan their lessons well. They sequence activities effectively so that pupils make rapid progress, as seen in a very well structured music lesson. In such lessons, teachers encourage pupils to try hard and find ways to interest the pupils through the choice of topic or effective use of resources. Pupils make good progress when teachers set clear aims for the lesson and ensure activities are carried out at a brisk pace. There is good practice here in science and also in physical education lessons. Boys learn well when tasks are clearly defined and the lesson is well-structured to check on the progress pupils are making so that additional support is offered where needed.
29. Less effective lessons often have an insufficient variety of teaching methods. Such lessons take into account neither the different ways students may prefer to learn, nor their different abilities. Teachers' expectations of what can be achieved are too low and the pace of learning drops so that pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. The range of teaching resources is limited, in particular, there is insufficient use of computers for both teaching and learning. Teaching in many subject areas does not support the skills of literacy and numeracy in a sufficiently focused way and pupils' learning is often impeded by their weak writing skills. Too few lessons plan to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education or to extend their ICT skills.
30. Teaching assistants (TAs) give very good and, on occasion, excellent support to pupils who have statements of special educational needs. They know the pupils very well and are sensitive to their needs. In the most successfully supported lessons, teacher and TA plan together, are familiar with individual education plans (IEPs) and are attuned to the specific needs of the pupil. The very few TAs who give more general support are very effective in supporting special educational needs pupils in mainstream lessons. In unsupported lessons of physical education, teachers include pupils with special educational needs very effectively, using extra coaching where appropriate. The music department offers a challenging curriculum that fully includes those with special educational needs. Other departments acknowledge the very good support they receive when TAs are present, but the majority, core subjects in particular, feel that the achievement of special educational needs pupils is weakened by the lack of general TA support in the more needy classes.
31. Assessment is beginning to support pupils' learning in Years 10 and 11 where targets are set for individual pupils' coursework. Where this happens, students' work is more focused and

they make good progress and report that they know what they must do to improve. Not all subjects give clear guidance for pupils about the way in which they can raise the standards of their work to achieve higher grades at GCSE or in Years 7, 8 and 9. For example, too few teachers check at the end of lessons to help pupils assess how much has been learnt. In science, there is good practice in setting targets for pupils to aim for and this is helping pupils to be more motivated and to make good progress. There are some inconsistencies in the quality of marking and the feedback given to students both within subjects and between subjects. In art and design and music, for example, pupils are given helpful comments on their work which are diagnostic and give advice on how to improve. This good practice is not used throughout the school and there are weaknesses in the quality of day-to-day marking in all the core subjects plus ICT, religious education and geography. Teachers do not use detailed information about students' earlier levels of achievement sufficiently well to be sure they meet their different needs. The setting of worthwhile homework is inconsistent.

## Sixth form

Teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- They motivate and encourage students very well.
- Students have very positive attitudes.
- Students make good progress in their subjects and achieve well.
- Small group sizes in some subjects can limit the dynamics of group work.
- Helpful feedback enables students to achieve well when their previous levels are taken into account.

### Commentary

32. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall as no unsatisfactory lessons were seen and nearly three quarters of lessons were good or better. Thirty per cent of lessons were very good.
33. Teaching is very good in art and design, business studies, history and media studies. In performing arts, where some lessons were sampled, the quality of teaching is never less than very good in dance, drama and music. Since the last inspection, teaching has improved in science. The teaching in mathematics continues to be good.
34. Teachers in the sixth form have good subject expertise and have a good understanding of ways to make their subject lively and interesting to their students. They plan lessons well and reinforce them with well-judged homework, which enables students to develop their research skills. Students often enter the sixth form with standards that are below average but they are helped to make good progress. This is because teachers have high expectations of what they can achieve and help them to set their sights high. In history, for example, the teacher sets a short test at the start of every lesson to help the students to assess what progress they have made and to set targets for what must be done to improve. Students respond well to the challenge and are motivated to learn as a result.
35. Teachers plan a good range of teaching methods, which help students to develop independent learning skills. In geography, for example, students were able to develop their research skills when undertaking the challenging task of investigating a case study of a developing country. In art and design, their learning is enriched through visits to galleries and mathematics students apply themselves successfully through completing open-ended tasks set by the teacher.

36. Students in the sixth form become good independent learners and increase their confidence because of the encouragement they receive. In all subjects, they work hard and are developing the capacity to work effectively, both independently and in groups. The use of ICT in teaching is generally underdeveloped in the sixth form, except for drama and media studies.
37. The assessment of the progress students make is satisfactory overall and is stronger than in the main school. This is because teachers have good knowledge of the demands of each examination course and share these well with their students. They also track progress effectively and support students' learning with regular feedback. The quality of marking is precise and helpful so that students know what their target grades are and what they need to do to reach or exceed them. Despite the small cohort in this year's sixth form, students receive good teaching overall and are making good progress.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is of satisfactory quality. It meets pupils' needs, ensures continuity in learning and provides very good opportunities for enrichment. Provision of accommodation and resources for learning are satisfactory.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good extra-curricular activities support pupils' learning and personal development.
- The broad range of courses in Years 10 and 11 meets the needs of pupils of all capabilities.
- Careers guidance prepares pupils well for the next stage in their lives.
- The curriculum in English and religious education is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils make insufficient use of ICT to support their learning and National Curriculum requirements for the use of ICT are not met in mathematics and design and technology.
- Provision for a daily act of collective worship does not fulfil statutory requirements.

## **Commentary**

38. The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of opportunities to meet the needs, interests and capabilities of all pupils. It meets statutory requirements, apart from the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship, but National Curriculum requirements for the use of ICT are not fully covered. Access to the curriculum is satisfactory for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs.
39. The school makes very good provision for pupils who have statements of special educational needs. The Student Support Centre makes exemplary provision for a range of pupils with special educational needs and is very effective in enabling them to overcome the many barriers to learning that they experience. The overall provision is weakened by the lack of general support available in mainstream lessons where there are high numbers of special educational needs pupils and accompanying behaviour and learning problems. The two morning 'buddy' reading sessions that involve large numbers of sixth form students in support of Year 7 pupils who have a low reading age, are proving very successful in raising the reading ages and self-esteem of pupils, at the same time as they improve the self-confidence and social awareness of the sixth formers.
40. The school has a policy and action plan to support the learning of gifted and talented pupils, but that plan is at a very early stage of implementation, and uneven provision leads to those pupils making insufficient progress in many subject areas. Drama caters well for gifted and talented pupils, and modern foreign languages offers Year 8 higher attainers a taster course in Italian. Teachers usually plan for the full range of pupils, but often omit activities intended to stretch the highest attainers, or those activities are not sufficiently challenging. In a few subjects, there are areas of the curriculum which cater better for girls than for boys.

41. Boys and girls of all backgrounds and capabilities appreciate and participate in good numbers in the extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. These experiences enrich and extend pupils' academic, sporting and aesthetic development.
42. The satisfactory programme of personal, social and health education, including courses for sex education and drugs education, assists pupils' all-round and personal development. The good sequencing of topics ensures that pupils receive advice, support and guidance at times most appropriate to their stages of development. Insufficient monitoring leads to pupils receiving an uneven quality of experience of the personal, social and health education modules.
43. Good careers education and guidance, in collaboration with Connexions and external links, ensure sound preparation for later life and continuity of learning. Pupils value and benefit from the effective preparation and follow up of work experience. A good Key Stage 4 option choice process ensures pupils and parents understand the courses available to them and make an informed choice, which takes into account pupils' preferences, aptitudes and career aspirations.
44. Innovative curriculum developments are helping to raise pupils' self-esteem and to enhance learning. For example, many of those pupils in Years 10 and 11, who lack interest and motivation in the normal curriculum, respond positively to the good opportunities to follow vocational and work-related courses. They value the opportunity to take NVQ courses at Hertfordshire Regional College and a horticultural course at Capel Manor College, with access to additional work experience. The setting up of an express set for high achieving pupils in French, with GCSE entry in Year 10, has motivated pupils and increased take up of the subject.
45. The uneven implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has resulted in an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in some but not all subjects. The organisation of the timetable is satisfactory overall, but the alternating teaching time allocation for optional subjects across Years 10 and 11 leads to those subjects which receive less time in Year 11 feeling disadvantaged.
46. The number and qualifications of teachers are sufficient in most curriculum areas, but recruitment difficulties have led to unqualified or non-specialist teaching in some subject areas, notably mathematics, science and religious education, and in some cases a series of temporary teachers. This has particularly affected quality and the confidence of some pupils in the teaching of mathematics. The school benefits from high quality support staff. The provision of technical support staff is satisfactory. The number of teaching assistants providing in-class support is insufficient.
47. Accommodation for teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Recent refurbishment has benefited mathematics, science and food technology, and other individual classrooms. The Student Support Centre resides in new, purpose-built accommodation. The changing rooms for physical education and outdoor hard areas are inadequate. The lack of dedicated suited accommodation for history and geography adversely affects provision. Accommodation for music is insufficient.
48. The library is a very good resource for the school and is well used by staff and pupils. The librarians, their assistants and volunteers have made the library a very high quality environment, which is valued by pupils. Borrowing rates are improving and the library is reasonably well stocked with a good range of books and magazines. The computers available for use by library users are barely sufficient for the number of staff and pupils but are well utilised. The library provides a very good service to subjects across the school by offering project loans in conjunction with the Schools' Library Service.

49. Resources for learning are satisfactory. Interactive whiteboards in five classrooms and access for all staff to laptops, data projectors, overhead projectors and media equipment enhance pupils' learning. Six well equipped ICT suites cater well for core ICT provision, but the lack of flexible access severely restricts pupils' use of ICT in other subject areas. The school has less than the recommended ratio of computers to pupils. Lack of resources for computer-aided design and manufacture in design and technology and data logging in science inhibits the raising of achievement in those areas. Pupils use the library and its good range of books effectively to support learning.

## **Sixth form**

The quality of the curriculum is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Skilled and well qualified teachers teach students well.
- Students broaden their experiences by participation in a good range of enrichment activities.
- Small numbers in the sixth form lead to a restricted curriculum range.
- Provision for a daily act of collective worship does not fulfil statutory requirements.

### **Commentary**

50. The school offers a good range of traditional courses, and has added breadth by offering an advanced course in media studies, advanced vocational courses in business and ICT, BTEC National Diploma courses in acting and dance, and an intermediate GNVQ course in leisure and tourism.
51. Last year's disappointing GCSE results resulted in small numbers joining the sixth form in 2004, leading to some subjects not running. Students who entered the sixth form did so because of their high regard for the school and its sixth form teaching. In a number of cases, students accepted places on courses which had not been their first choice with the result that the range of subjects on offer has not fully met their needs. Many group sizes are small, which means that students receive good individual support, but do not benefit from the stimulation and challenge provided by larger groups. Timetabling is satisfactory. Time allocation is good, but single period timetabling limits the achievements of students in art and design.
52. The school plans to maintain and extend the range of courses and activities for sixth form students by developing a post-16 consortium with the local college and local maintained and independent schools. This is currently at an early stage of development, with chemistry offered in collaboration with another local school, but seven collaborative courses are planned for September 2005.
53. Students appreciate the good range of sports and other activities, which enrich their education. A good complementary programme enhances students' learning and develops wider key skills. The life skills and citizenship programme prepares students satisfactorily for later life and learning. Students find the community service component of the programme rewarding and enjoyable. The school capitalises on opportunities for sixth-formers to exercise responsibility and support younger pupils, to the benefit of their own personal and social development. Higher education guidance, including university visits, raises students' aspirations.

## **Care, guidance and support**

The attention given to pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Support, advice and guidance, based on monitoring, are satisfactory. Involvement of pupils is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Personal support for pupils is good.
- Academic guidance is inconsistent.

### **Commentary**

54. The school's pastoral system is strong, and this is appreciated by both pupils and parents. Pupils get off to a good start, thanks to a carefully planned and organised induction programme which helps them and their parents get used to their new environment. Throughout the school, tutors and heads of year liaise closely with parents where necessary. Good focused support is readily available for pupils who need particular help, such as mentoring for Year 11s, advice from the attendance worker, or counselling. The Student Support Centre is a haven for pupils who have trouble coping in class as it provides a high level of care and guidance to pupils with special educational needs. Academic guidance is generally weak, other than in the most successful departments of the school. Many pupils have little awareness of their targets or how to improve their work because they were not sufficiently involved in setting them.
55. Lack of supervision in some outdoor areas, such as the tennis courts, means that there are opportunities for unacceptable behaviour to pass unnoticed by staff. Health and safety issues from the previous inspection have been resolved satisfactorily.

## **Sixth form**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Sixth formers enjoy good pastoral and sound academic support.
- Students are well involved in the life of the school.

### **Commentary**

56. Relationships in the sixth form are universally good, and staff and students treat one another with respect. As numbers are small, tutors and teachers are able to monitor students' personal and academic progress carefully, and students know that they can always discuss any problems they have. However, many feel that they have not been given the best possible guidance on the courses they should follow, because of the limited range on offer in the sixth form.
57. Sixth form students are happy to take on responsibility and make the most of the good opportunities they are given to do their bit for the school. The head boy and girl run the school council very efficiently; for example, while prefects help maintain order at break and lunchtime. Others help with younger pupils as part of their community service; for example, through paired reading or the Sheredes project, and they take these duties seriously and do a good job.

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

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

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- General information for parents is good.
- Reports to parents on their children's progress are unsatisfactory.
- Good collaboration is developing with other schools and colleges.
- A number of departments have developed strong links with the community.

## **Commentary**

58. The school offers parents an extensive range of written information about the curriculum their children will be following and the choices they can make for future study. This is further strengthened by Parents in Partnership presentations and by opportunities for individual consultation and discussion. Subject review meetings in the autumn term give parents a good chance to talk about progress early in the year, and tutors and heads of year are always happy to talk about any concerns parents may have. The prospectus, governors' annual report to parents and termly newsletters are well presented and helpful for reference. There are some minor omissions from the prospectus which the school is in the process of amending.
59. Reports to parents on their children's progress have not improved sufficiently since the last inspection. In Years 7 and 8, there is very little indication of the standards pupils have reached or how their progress has been assessed. Further up the school, in Years 9, 10 and 11, pupils' grades for each subject are stated, but usually without a clear explanation of how well the pupils are actually doing for their age. There is also inconsistency between subjects across the school, with the stronger departments producing more helpful comments. Elsewhere, comments are often too vague and unspecific to be useful, or are linked to attitudes and behaviour rather than the subject in question. The requirement to report on citizenship in Years 7 to 9 is not met.
60. The dynamic faculties such as performing arts and physical education have built up a wide network of community links which give pupils great opportunities to develop their skills and talents, represent the school and broaden their experiences. Pupils have the chance to compete in all manner of tournaments and leagues or to perform and see performances at a number of venues. Community groups also benefit from the knowledge and expertise of school staff. The link between the special needs provision and parents is very strong and parents value the work of the Student Support Centre. There are also strong links with many primary feeder schools, which enables the Centre to establish a good baseline of information on pupils with special needs. Links with other high schools, both state and independent, enhance the curriculum and provide valuable reciprocal professional development opportunities for staff. There are very good links with the local emergency services and with outside agencies such as the community police.

## **Sixth form**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Information for parents about the sixth form is good.
- Community links support the sixth form curriculum well.

### **Commentary**

61. The sixth form prospectus gives parents a good insight into what the school offers, and they have good opportunities to find out about how their children are doing. The quality of reports to parents on their children's progress is broadly satisfactory in the sixth form, although they are not sent out until just before the public examinations start. This is too late to be useful to parents who want to help their children improve their grades.

62. The good community links established in the main school are particularly valuable to sixth form students as they specialise in the subjects concerned and are able to spend more time honing their skills in, for example, physical education or the performing arts. Links with the local high school enable chemistry and sporting opportunities to be offered to students in the sixth form. The school also has exciting plans for closer future collaboration between its sixth form and other schools and colleges in the area.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory because the recently formed leadership team has accurately identified the actions the school should take to improve. Leadership is sound because an agreed set of values shapes the school's ethos. There are a number of inconsistencies in the leadership and management of subjects. Governors fulfil most of their statutory requirements. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a strong commitment to equality and inclusion at all levels.
- The headteacher, supported by the senior leadership team, provides a clear vision for the future direction of the school.
- Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Some subject leaders lead their teams with flair and vision and recent appointments have been positive.
- Performance lags behind similar schools and too many pupils underachieve.
- Strategic planning has yet to have an impact on raising standards.
- Monitoring performance data, reviewing patterns and taking action is not embedded across the school.
- Leadership by the special educational needs co-ordinator is exemplary.
- The sixth form is managed well.

### **Commentary**

63. There have been major changes in the leadership of the school since the last inspection. The headteacher has been in post for three years and, following the retirement of a long-standing deputy, has since been joined by two new deputy headteachers. The senior leadership team has been strengthened with an additional assistant headteacher and the internal promotion of another assistant headteacher within the last 12 months. This team, supported by the seconded head of sixth form and the financial manager, is developing into an effective leadership group and the philosophy of distributing leadership responsibilities throughout the school is ensuring the commitment of all to the actions the school takes. In addition, there have been changes in the leadership of the three core subjects in the last six months.
64. The governors are very supportive of the school and are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of its performance. They make good use of the increasing amount of data about standards, which is provided for them by the data manager. Governors are aware of subjects that are particularly successful and those where there are difficulties, especially as a result of staffing problems. The recently appointed Chair of governors has started to establish business-like relationships with the school through a well-led committee structure chaired by committed and experienced governors. Governors have been very supportive of the headteacher's strategies to overcome problems caused by staff recruitment and in taking action to address incidents of disruptive behaviour. The governors ensure that the large majority of statutory requirements are met, although the school fails to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and there are some omissions in the information provided to parents plus National Curriculum coverage in two core subjects, English and ICT.
65. The headteacher has played a key role in articulating the priority for raising standards across the school. He has had the vision to take the initiative in developing partnerships with other



local schools and colleges, with the intention of broadening the curriculum opportunities available for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and for students in the sixth form. Collectively, the leadership team has a clear view of the areas that need to be improved and they command the respect of the staff. Procedures to undertake self-review of the school's effectiveness are developing with a planned programme of observations by senior leaders and heads of faculties. At present, the accuracy of the evaluations of the quality of education provided by each subject area is variable, especially as the understanding of the best way to use performance data is underdeveloped. The school has rightly identified this for action during this academic year and the inspectors regard this as an urgent priority. The school improvement plan is well conceived and has identified the correct action to be taken in order to improve teaching and learning, including reviewing the guidelines contained in the 'Sheredes ideal lesson', and establishing collaboration across subject areas to harness the good practice. The introduction this year of a coaching programme to support teachers in planning effective lessons that meet the needs of all pupils is already beginning to have a positive impact.

66. The quality of middle leadership is sound. The school has struggled to fill some key posts and subject leadership has been weak in several areas over the previous years. During the inspection, however, all subjects had suitably qualified and experienced leaders in place, although some staff had more than one area of responsibility. Some subject areas are very well led, notably physical education, art and design, and the performing arts faculty, and as a result, the quality of teaching is good and pupils achieve well. The impact of historical staffing problems was evident through too many inconsistencies in the quality of aspects of management. These are beginning to be resolved with a full complement of leaders in post. The year heads effectively support the personal development of pupils.
67. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) is an exemplary leader and very effective manager of the special educational needs provision. She is an excellent role model of commitment and hard work, being energetic in seeking support for her work from parents, teachers and outside agencies. She leads a very strong team of special educational needs teachers and teacher assistants (TAs), although the team is not sufficient in number to meet the support needs of the mainstream school.
68. The arrangements for performance management are sound. The process is starting to make a close link between performance and professional development and the coaching programme is part of this. The school's in-service training provision so far this year has been targeted well to match the priorities in the school development plan but it is too soon to judge positive impact. Induction for newly qualified teachers is managed well and overseas-trained teachers also benefit from additional support to enable them to integrate into the English education system. The commitment to staff development for all staff has been recognised through the award of 'Investors in People' status.
69. Financial control is sound. The budget is carefully planned and ensures that finances and resources are targeted according to educational need. The finances are prudently managed to take account of increase in the school roll. The money received to support pupils with special educational needs is used effectively. The principles of best value are followed. The school has overcome an earlier deficit through some staff redundancies a few years ago requiring some staff to double up their roles. These are now being un-picked as opportunities arise and the school is making satisfactory progress towards implementing workforce reform. The school is not able to attract extra funding from any government projects that are targeted at schools in challenging circumstances. However, it is taking action to gain additional income and status through seeking to become a Specialist Performing Arts College.

## **Sixth form**

70. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and the governors recognise the value of the sixth form within the school and there is an ambitious plan to improve the range of provision in partnership with the local college of further education. Sixth formers are

given a high profile within the school and are valued as influential role models for younger pupils.

71. The leadership and management provided by the head of sixth form are sound generally, with particular strengths in promoting a positive ethos among the students and responding to their pastoral needs. Importance is attached to organising events which enrich the life of the sixth form considerably. She is well supported in this by the team of tutors. The arrangements for monitoring the academic progress of students and providing guidance on further opportunities in education and employment are not sufficiently developed, however. The head of sixth form also has little opportunity to monitor the quality of the education received by sixth formers, given other pressures on her time.
72. Subject leadership in the sixth form is always at least satisfactory and is often good or very good. The outcomes of this are seen in the good teaching received by the students. The sixth form has satisfactory accommodation for students' personal study, although access to information and communication technology resources is limited at present.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005*

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,017,504	Balance from previous year	248,164
Total expenditure	3,954,864	Balance carried forward to the next year	310,804
Expenditure per pupil	4,284.79		

The carry forward figure is planned to meet the increased salary costs for 2005 – 2006.

## WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work-related learning is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a well-conceived work-related learning policy.
- It has clear aims and objectives.
- It is well managed by the head of vocational education.
- There is insufficient administrative support.

### Commentary

73. The provision for work-related learning is good. The policy has a clear rationale and purpose, with appropriate aims and objectives to ensure that all students and pupils are able to prepare for adult and working life. The work-related programmes are led and managed by the head of vocational education, who has developed an interesting range of activities for students and pupils across the school, including the sixth form. Where possible, programmes are linked to approved qualifications, and are also part of the individual students Progress File.
74. At Key Stage 3, pupils are offered a range of problem solving and insight into work activities as well as opportunities through personal and social education. In addition, pupils are offered careers education and guidance through 'The Real Game', and in Year 9 start the Progress File. This enables pupils to develop a good understanding of the World of Work. The Careers Library is available to obtain specific careers information.

75. In Key Stage 4, there are three main programmes. A work-related learning course in partnership with Hertfordshire Regional College and over 30 local employers leads to a NVQ qualification in a range of vocational courses, including catering, construction, engineering, and health and beauty. These programmes meet pupils' needs well, enabling them to spend time at the college, on a work placement and working in school. The management of placements on this programme is good.
76. The World of Work course is offered in partnership with Capel Manor College. The students study horticulture, environment and animal care, spending a day a week at the college, one day a week on placement and follow the ASDAN course in school in addition to their core curriculum. At present, no additional administrative support is available for finding, checking and monitoring placements for this course, which is unsatisfactory.
77. The Access to Apprenticeship programme is very new and will offer students and pupils the opportunity, in partnership with Hertfordshire Regional College, to begin vocational courses that can progress into full apprenticeships.
78. Students and pupils of all abilities can access these courses, and are encouraged to do so. These are good examples of partnership programmes developed to meet the needs of students and pupils at the school.
79. Other Key Stage 4 activities open to pupils at the school include vocational courses in business and leisure and tourism, industry days, personal and social education and extended work placements for certain students. Careers Education and Guidance includes opportunities to prepare for work experience and complete the 'The Real Game'. In Year 11, all pupils complete a one-week work experience and receive advice and guidance on their next steps. Additional support is provided by Connexions, and students can visit the Connexions room to obtain further advice and support.
80. In the sixth form, good opportunities are available for students. Students can study for vocational qualifications in business and leisure and tourism where visits to and visitors from business, industry and the wider community are important parts of the programmes. In addition, all students receive advice and support on careers and further and higher education.
81. Overall, the provision currently is good, but still more needs to be done to ensure that at Key Stage 4 all pupils of all abilities get more experiences of work-related learning. The school may wish to consider bringing careers education and guidance, including work experience, within the management of vocational and work-related learning.

# **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 **unsatisfactory**.

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

- Standards by the end of Year 9 are improving but remain well below average in writing.
- Standards by the end of Year 11 are below average and too few boys reach a grade C or above.
- There are insufficient opportunities for drama and ICT.
- Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good.
- Opportunities for extending speaking and listening skills across the curriculum are often missed.

#### **Commentary**

82. Standards in tests at the end of Year 9 are slightly below the average compared with all schools nationally and well below similar schools. On the basis of their prior attainment, their standards are broadly average. The trend in performance is upwards but in 2004 there was a dip in results. Pupils achieve more highly in reading than in writing and, whilst girls are close to the national average, boys are well below. More able pupils perform at well below the average and boys are less successful than girls. Standards seen during the inspection suggest that results will improve this year but standards in writing, speaking and listening remain well below average and this is unsatisfactory achievement. Standards in reading are only just satisfactory.
83. At GCSE, results overall are below average with very few pupils achieving the highest grades. In English Language, standards are below average and, whilst girls are broadly in line, the standard reached by boys is well below average. In English Literature, results overall are average, but boys' performance is below that of the standard reached by boys nationally. The number of boys entered is well below the average number entered compared with all schools. The standard of work seen indicates similar results this year and this is unsatisfactory achievement, especially for boys.
84. Achievement overall is unsatisfactory but pupils make good progress in Year 9. The rate of progress in Years 7 and 8 is too slow and teaching is not sufficiently focused on the key strategies to develop and extend oral skills and writing. By the end of Year 9, pupils are well prepared for the national tests but, due to the weak curriculum in Years 7 and 8, the application of skills is very insecure. The recent revision of schemes of work is helping to improve this situation. At GCSE, too few pupils achieve the higher grades and this is because pupils are not challenged sufficiently in lessons. The setting arrangements are not used effectively to provide lessons that meet the full range of needs of pupils and extend learning appropriately. Furthermore, the progress of pupils is not closely monitored and this is leading to underachievement. Reading tests indicate that pupils participating in a buddy reading scheme where sixth form students are paired with Year 7 pupils are achieving well.
85. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teachers know their subject well and there is some good, very good and on occasions, excellent teaching in the department. A very small percentage of the teaching was unsatisfactory. In the good lessons, teachers had very clear planning that identified different support for certain activities for groups of pupils. The best teaching was in Year 9 and Year 11 lessons where the focus of the tests and examinations

was driving the content of the lesson. In too many lessons, however, the teaching did not allow pupils to rehearse their ideas orally or to discuss or extend their answers before writing. Provision for the lowest ability pupils is good. A small number are withdrawn and work in groups or one-to-one using literacy software programs. The achievement for these pupils is often very good. The schemes of work do not reflect sufficient focus on teaching reading and writing skills or the use of drama to support speaking and listening. There are too few opportunities for ICT in English lessons. Some lessons start with an introduction and a warm-up to the lesson but too few end with a review or plenary, which means that teachers are not routinely assessing what and how much pupils have learned. Marking is inconsistent across the department with some very good examples where feedback clearly outlines both the strengths and areas for development. Some books are very infrequently marked so pupils do not have a clear sense of how they are progressing.

86. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. The recently appointed head of department is beginning to make more effective use of the test results for pupils in order to revise the schemes of work and improve the assessments of pupils. A range of schemes of work is developing but there are a few gaps, for example, too few opportunities for reading and writing non-fiction texts in Years 7 and 8 and no consistent expectation that drama is used to support speaking and listening skills. The head of department has created an effective team who work enthusiastically with each other and have recently introduced a signpost system in Year 11 to help pupils to understand how to improve. There is an action plan to raise standards for Year 11 pupils but this needs to be extended across the school. As yet, there is insufficient focus in the plan to address the weaknesses in writing and particularly the low standards achieved by boys. Self-evaluation is satisfactory but does not delve deeply enough to get a real picture of provision across the department and therefore is not yet contributing to a rigorous identification of improvements needed to raise standards. Staff absence has had an impact on the progress within the department in terms of raising standards as this has reduced the capacity of the head of department to initiate change and monitor the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress. The department has benefited from the support of an advanced skills teacher (AST) from within the school. There are no enrichment opportunities offered by the department.
87. Standards and teaching have not improved since the last inspection and so progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. The teachers in the department are well qualified and have good knowledge of their subject. The head of department is new and keen to move forward. If staff absences can be resolved, there is the capacity within the department to improve.

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

88. Pupils' literacy skills are unsatisfactory. Standards in reading are average, but in writing, speaking and listening, they are below average. There is an action plan and over the last few years the range of activities has been relevant and useful – e.g. buying mini-whiteboards for every department. However, there is no evidence of the impact of these actions. Some departments are making use of writing frames but their use is infrequent and inconsistent and in some subjects, for example, in science, the lack of structured support for weak writing skills is preventing pupils from achieving well. There is some good practice; for example, in food technology, where good use is made of dictionaries and key words so that pupils' literacy skills are not hindering their progress in the lesson. There are, however, too few opportunities for speaking and listening in lessons across the school and pupils are rarely asked to extend their answers or use more precise language to express their thinking. This was a weakness in the last inspection so progress in improving literacy skills across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers display lesson plans and learning objectives in lessons, so that pupils know what they will learn and when they have achieved it.
- Target setting and half-termly assessment lead to pupils receiving accurate information and personalised guidance to help them achieve their full potential.
- Routine marking rarely includes comments explaining what pupils need to do to improve.
- Plenary sessions do not provide the opportunity for pupils to reflect on and evaluate their own learning.

## Commentary

89. In 2004, GCSE results were well below average, representing unsatisfactory achievement. Results at the end of Year 9 were in line with national averages, with performance at Levels 7 and 8 for the first time, representing good achievement. Currently, standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Staffing difficulties and coursework problems affected GCSE results in 2004. Stable staffing, effective strategies to raise achievement and the capability and motivation of current Year 11 pupils have led to improved attainment.
90. By Year 11, pupils understand and produce complex language describing past, present and future activities. One girl's coursework assignment fluently described and evaluated her work experience placement, relating its relevance to her future career plans. A dream sequence topic inspired pupils to write humorously and imaginatively. The highest attainers in Years 10 and 11 use French for genuine communication in some lessons. By Year 9, higher-attaining pupils can use a variety of structures in sentences and short accounts and describe past and future events. One pupil's draft letter to a French partner school penfriend was an extended and accomplished piece of writing which used complex structures and a range of tenses to convey an interesting account of her life in England. Middle-attaining pupils can distinguish past and future events but use simpler language. Lower-attaining pupils understand individual words and short sentences, are keen to pronounce new words with a good accent, and write sentences and short paragraphs with support.
91. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers plan well structured lessons, which incorporate starter and plenary activities and match expected learning to the capabilities and learning styles of pupils. Where teaching is good or very good, pupils develop their thinking skills by explaining how they arrive at answers. The development and application of general literacy skills lead to secure understanding and learning of language. For example, pupils associate words with similar spellings or roots in English and French. A good balance of activities ensures pupils develop listening, reading, speaking and writing skills in a complementary way. Clear time limits for activities maintain a good pace of learning. Teachers speak in French as much as possible, which develops pupils' understanding and use of spoken language. Well chosen activities enable pupils with special educational needs to access language without reliance on extended reading. In a few lessons, however, unsatisfactory behaviour interrupts learning, lesson objectives are insufficiently specific, so that pupils are not clear as to what they are expected to learn. The teacher speaks mainly in English, and a slow pace and lack of challenge mean that high attainers do not achieve as well as they might.
92. Leadership and management and progress since the last inspection have been satisfactory. Now that staffing difficulties have been resolved, there is growing evidence of good impact. The department knows its strengths and weaknesses well and has planned appropriate actions to achieve necessary improvements. A good handbook and comprehensive schemes of work support teaching well. Formal and informal lesson observation has recently begun and encourages the sharing of good practice. Good classroom and corridor displays exemplify good work at different levels, supporting learning and self-assessment. Classrooms

are well equipped and each teacher has a teaching base. Regular visits to French speaking countries enhance learning for Years 7 and 8, but exchanges for older pupils have not occurred in recent years. The number of pupils studying French in Years 10 and 11 has fallen, and sixth form courses have not run in recent years. However, an innovative GCSE express course begun in Year 9 and completed in Year 10 has increased take-up, and there is interest in a combined Year 11 and Year 12 AS level course next year. Teachers demonstrate expert knowledge of external examination requirements and prepare pupils very well. Teachers give generously of their own time to support pupils' learning after school and during holidays. Pupils not continuing with French receive externally accredited entry level certification at the end of Year 9. High attaining Year 8 pupils experience a taster course in Italian, but there is no provision for pupils to study two languages in Years 10 and 11.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards by the end of Year 9 are improving but remain below average.
- Standards by the end of Year 11 are well below average.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.
- Leadership of the department is satisfactory.

### **Commentary**

93. Results in tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were below average when compared with all schools but were well below average when compared to schools with similar prior attainment. The 2004 results when compared with those for 2003 show a slight improvement but this represents unsatisfactory achievement.
94. Results in 2004 GCSE examinations were well below national average and low when compared with schools where pupils achieved similar standards at the end of Year 9. Results in 2004 fell below those for 2003 which were also well below national averages. This represents poor achievement. The standards in these tests and examinations have not improved since the last inspection. The performance by girls in 2004 was significantly better than that of boys, which was very low.
95. Inspection evidence shows standards in Year 9 are improving. However, achievement by the end of Year 9 remains unsatisfactory, because too few pupils are achieving at the higher levels. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are improving because of the impact of the National Strategy for Mathematics. The department has effectively focused on targeting groups of pupils to reach the national standard by the end of Year 9. Inspection evidence shows standards in Year 11 are well below average. For example, in some lessons, pupils make good progress with their learning; however, by the end of Year 11, achievement is unsatisfactory. Too few pupils achieve the higher grades at GCSE than nationally because they are not challenged to extend their learning and their progress is not rigorously monitored, and this leads to underachievement. Because of the frequent change of teachers for many pupils, the rate of improvement made by them in all years is insufficient to raise their standards quickly. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is also unsatisfactory.
96. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. There is some good and occasionally very good teaching across Years 7 to 11. Where teaching is very good, it is because teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well, have high expectations and time is used productively. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is largely a factor of the ineffective management of pupils' behaviour and inexperience and knowledge of the curriculum. Not all teachers have built effective relationships with pupils to dispel the negative attitude many hold towards

mathematics. The main strengths of teaching are teachers' enthusiasm and willingness to improve. The best lessons feature good planning with clear objectives and energetic teaching that engages pupils in learning. The majority of lessons start with an introductory activity that consolidates and extends pupils' understanding of basic mathematical concepts. Not all lessons end with a review and thus teachers are unable to assess what pupils have learnt. The marking of pupils' work is infrequent and does not provide pupils with advice on how to improve. Assessments in relation to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades are not sufficiently rigorous to identify potential underachievement, as is evident by the low results attained at GCSE in 2004.

97. Leadership of mathematics is satisfactory but management is not. The recently appointed head of department provides good support to teachers and is committed to raising standards. She has put in place a number of actions to improve teaching and learning but progress is slow because staffing of the department remains severely problematic. An impact of this has been the redistribution of classes to teachers with the head of department teaching the lower ability groups. Much time has been spent in writing schemes of work, introducing a positive reward system for pupils and putting in place procedures to support new colleagues. There are, however, too few opportunities for her to visit classrooms and gauge the impact of the changes that have been put in place and the fundamental issue of unsatisfactory teaching and learning has yet to be fully addressed. As a result, progress in raising pupils' standards is too slow. The department is benefiting significantly from the support it receives from visiting advanced skills mathematics teachers who are used effectively to work with teachers who do not have a mathematical background. Although results in national tests and examinations are analysed, there is little monitoring of the department's performance as a whole and using data to track pupils' progress systematically. A more rigorous self-review and monitoring process is essential if the department is to assess its own progress and set appropriate targets for improvement. The additional support provided through revision classes is positively impacting on pupils' achievement by the end of Years 9 and 11. There are few opportunities for enrichment outside normal lessons and too few occasions for pupils to use ICT. Teaching has not improved since the last inspection and there is no whole-school policy for the development of mathematics across the school. As a result, progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

98. Pupils' competence in mathematics is adequately developed to allow them to make progress in other subjects. Pupils have a reasonable command of number facts and are able to tackle numerical calculations in different situations. There is, for example, good practice in food and design technology. In science, pupils work accurately with calculations. They use coordinates correctly and graphing techniques well in geography.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

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

- GCSE results in 2004 were well below average with boys underachieving more than girls.
- New leadership has addressed many key issues and there has been significant improvement recently.
- Some teachers have insufficient skills to enable the most able or the least able pupils to succeed as well as they should in mixed ability classes.
- Where learning support is available, it is very good, but it is insufficient to meet demands.
- Accommodation and resources are very good due to newly-built laboratories and highly competent technicians.

#### **Commentary**



99. In the end of key stage tests in 2004, pupils reached average standards by the end of Year 9. The 2004 GCSE results were well below average and there was greater underachievement in boys. GCSE results have declined over the last three years. Standards in lessons are in line with expectations for their age in Year 9 and below in Year 11. Overall, standards are below average. Pupils enter school with levels slightly below average. Achievement by Year 9 is satisfactory, but achievement by Year 11 is unsatisfactory and is unsatisfactory overall. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and of those who are most able is unsatisfactory due to a lack of support or challenge, particularly in mixed ability classes. The achievement of boys falls short of expectations, mainly because their literacy skills prevent them from accessing higher grades.
100. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers' sound knowledge of their subject allows pupils to acquire satisfactory practical skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers do not challenge pupils well enough to enable their learning to be sufficiently tailored to their needs. This is because assessment of pupils' abilities is not used effectively in planning of teaching and learning. Teachers use resources well. Starter activities and good use of time are well planned, leading to very good pace in most lessons. Most pupils have good attitudes and are willing to attend booster classes to help them improve. Where teachers have good class control, pupils' behaviour is good. However, there are a few teachers who do not have this control and, in some lessons, this causes a deterioration in learning. Homework is used very well in Years 7 to 9 because teachers inform pupils on how they could improve very well. However, pupils' class work is not thoroughly or constructively assessed and pupils are not fully aware of how they can improve, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
101. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The head of department has good vision and has recognised where many improvements can be made and how to implement them. She provides a good role model to her staff and has built an effective team. The school experienced problems recruiting well-qualified science teachers in 2004 and this caused a downturn in GCSE results. These issues have largely been resolved and standards are now rising. Although the department monitors pupils' performance data satisfactorily, there has not yet been enough time to increase pupils' attainment sufficiently in Years 10 and 11. The department is monitored well and effective action is taken to build teachers' effectiveness. For example, the science team meets regularly with the local education authority's science advisor and, as a result, innovative improvements in the use of assessment in Years 7 to 9 have been introduced.
102. Resources and accommodation are good. New laboratories and highly valued technician support ensure that teachers have the right environment and equipment to teach science effectively. Wall displays are satisfactory. Lack of data projectors and ICT within laboratories have held back progress in the use of science software and simulations. The school acknowledges this and action is being taken to improve these facilities. Flammable liquids are not stored in a separate flameproof container and action is also being taken to address this. Otherwise, chemicals and other hazardous materials are maintained well.
103. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Teaching has improved, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and the attainment of these pupils has improved. However, standards in Years 10 and 11 have dropped. Resources, which were criticised as insufficient in the previous inspection, have improved considerably.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is too great a proportion of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Too many pupils make too little progress.
- Many pupils do not achieve the standards they are capable of demonstrating.
- There is the basis for a rich experience for pupils in ICT but poor teaching negates its impact.

### Commentary

104. The school has no information on the standards in ICT for pupils entering the school in Year 7 as no records or examples of work are transferred from feeder primary schools. Pupils have, nevertheless, been taught ICT before entering the school and demonstrate competency in using computers and software. By the end of Year 9 pupils' standards are below average. Teacher assessment in 2004 reported 69 per cent of pupils to have achieved National Curriculum Level 5 or better. This is below the national average. The standards of work seen in class mirrored this performance. Pupils' work is limited in complexity and in volume. Many pupils produce very limited evidence of the development of their skills and understanding.
105. In 2004, 49 students were prepared for a GNVQ ICT examination with the potential to achieve an award equivalent to four GCSE grades C or better. Only 22 succeeded in gaining accreditation. Fifteen of these successful students were girls and a higher proportion of them compared with boys gained merits and distinctions. These results were a significant decline on the previous year. In 2003, 42 pupils achieved success and in that year boys' performance was much better. These results are below average. Although no national figures are published for success in GNVQ ICT, schools using this programme normally expect to get a much higher proportion of pupils succeeding. The work seen in class largely corresponded with these low levels of examination performance. While some pupils were producing course work of a high standard, there was much that was lacking in detail and complexity. Pupils' productivity is low. This is also reflected in the difficulty the school had reported in securing completed course work from pupils prior to their final assessments.
106. The standards currently realised by pupils at the end of Year 9 means that their achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils have the ability to have covered and understood much more and to produce work of greater sophistication and depth. The achievement of pupils at Year 11 is also unsatisfactory. Current standards are below those the school has realised in previous years and clearly below those that pupils are capable of reaching. In one examination class, pupils were proud to demonstrate their computer presentations. Some could have been used for commercial advertising promotions, although pupils were not fully aware of their potential audience or a context where their products could be used. The number of pupils producing work of high standard is relatively small and points to the overall underachievement of the year group. The low achievement at both Year 9 and Year 11 stems from the teaching that pupils receive.
107. Teaching and learning in ICT are unsatisfactory throughout Years 7 to 11. In all years, teaching quality varies from good to poor but unfortunately there is too much teaching that is unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned and have very appropriate content. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the methodology and resources of the National Strategy are used. In Years 10 and 11, the clear structure of the GNVQ course is used to provide learning opportunities with a similar appropriate content for other pupils only following the core programme. However, delivery is too often ineffective with insufficient rapport being established between teachers and their classes. As a result, pupils neither understand essential concepts nor are appropriately briefed on the learning tasks they must undertake. In consequence, there is frequent poor behaviour in class, sometimes at levels that are quite unacceptable. There is also insufficient

variation or choice in learning activities, including some that can extend able pupils. There is little use of assessment to inform learning. Pupils do not receive sufficient individual advice on their development and on what they must do to achieve higher standards. Homework is not used well to extend learning beyond the school lessons.

108. Therefore, learning is too often unsatisfactory with little progress being made in lessons. Pupils become bored where they are learning little and this does not motivate them to work or learn on their own initiative.
109. Not all teaching is poor. When lessons are well structured and when activities are well introduced to pupils, they want to learn and actively engage with the learning tasks set. This endeavour leads some pupils towards the recorded examination successes and work of the quality described earlier. Unfortunately, this kind of teaching and learning is not the norm within the ICT department.
110. Leadership is satisfactory. There is a good vision for the subject both at Key Stage 3 and 4. Work is extensively planned and well documented. The school is actively seeking to draw on the tried and tested methods of the National Strategy and uses appropriate published resources. At Key Stage 4, the GNVQ programme is used to offer a pathway to achievement that can give pupils the equivalent of four good GCSE grades. However, the major shortcoming is that this vision and planning is not translated into good teaching and learning for all pupils and the good practice among some staff teaching the subject is not the norm. Management is therefore unsatisfactory.
111. Resources for the subject are adequate with teaching undertaken in specialist computer suites. However, one intensively used room is too small and is inappropriately proportioned and pupils who must sit closely together at the back cannot see the detail on the interactive whiteboard.
112. Since the previous inspection, additions have been made to the school ICT infrastructure and good technician support is available. There is a taught programme in place for Years 7 to 9 but this change has not yet led to an improvement in standards. The achievement of pupils at the end of Year 11 remains unsatisfactory. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory.

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

113. The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
114. Good use is made of ICT to support pupils with special educational needs. Specialist software supports their learning in basic literacy and numeracy and computer resources are in constant use. In art and design, pupils use the internet to study works of art and design, word processing is extensively used but there is limited development of the use of ICT as an artistic medium. In other subjects, use is more limited. In design and technology, aspects of computer-aided design are not taught and this means that statutory requirements for the subject are not met. This is also the case in mathematics where important aspects of work with data handling are not covered. ICT is not used sufficiently in English. In other subjects, ICT has not yet been deployed to make the full contribution to teaching and learning that is possible.
115. The school has not met the government target for the 1:5 ratio of computers to pupils and access to equipment is sometimes a difficulty. There are insufficient computer resources provided for some departments and the internet supported network does not fully extend to all sections of the school. Booked access by classes to computer suites can be difficult as they often do not have spare capacity. The school library catalogue may be consulted on the school network but the library itself has only four computers available for pupils to use for coursework and research.

## HUMANITIES

### Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong general teaching and learning strategies have been developed for use in the classes.
- The current Locally Agreed Syllabus is not being rigorously implemented in all years.
- The staffing is unsatisfactory.

#### Commentary

116. At the end of Year 11 in 2004, the standards of attainment in the GCSE short course are below the national average. Around 40 per cent of pupils gained the higher grades of A\* to C. The standards of work seen during the inspection are below the levels expected nationally. Pupils can make intelligent reference to various moral and social issues that are part of the syllabus. These include topics like abortion and euthanasia. Their knowledge and understanding of the religious viewpoints on these are significantly less strong. The pupils' written skills are weaker than their ability in discussion work. The attainment of girls is better than that of boys. Overall, the achievement of pupils is unsatisfactory. Lack of expertise in the teaching and limits on the time available for teaching in Years 10 and 11 are the main factors in this.
117. At the end of Year 9, standards of attainment are below the standards indicated in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils are familiar with various aspects of world religions such as Hinduism and Judaism. Their knowledge and understanding, however, are not very developed and often only extend to the external manifestations of religion such as symbols and religious buildings. Their knowledge and understanding of the central beliefs that lie beyond these are not strong. Their ability to see how their learning might have relevance to their own lives and experiences is also not strong. Their achievement is unsatisfactory due to lack of expertise in the teaching.
118. Overall, the teaching is satisfactory but with some unsatisfactory aspects. Lessons are well prepared and many of them have an exciting range of activities that maintain the pupils' interest. Consequently, pupils are attentive and well behaved in the classes. All lessons contain a range of work that is planned to help pupils with special educational needs and to help the less able and more able pupils. High expectations by the teachers and a fast pace ensure that a significant amount of learning is done in the time available. Lack of expertise in the subject matter, however, means that pupils' learning in the specifically religious aspects of the topics addressed is weak. Some lessons have too much emphasis on moral and social issues and some topics drawn from world religions are often not covered accurately enough and they have insufficient depth. An assessment policy is in place but there is some inconsistency in the marking of pupils' books. The use of ICT in the learning is limited. Homework is regularly set. The teaching makes a good contribution to the development of literacy skills as well as to some aspects of pupils' moral, social and cultural development.
119. The leadership is satisfactory. A development plan is in place. The current leader has worked hard to support the large number of non-specialist teachers. Management of the subject is unsatisfactory. The current Locally Agreed Syllabus has yet to be implemented in a rigorous way. The staffing is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient expertise in the department to take it forward effectively and this is having a significant negative effect on the pupils' learning. Resources are good. The accommodation is good. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

## Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at GCSE are improving.
- There is a committed team of teachers who are focused on raising standards.
- The department is developing an improving range of teaching and learning styles to engage learners.
- There is a lack of ICT facilities.
- Fieldwork needs to be further developed in all key stages.
- There is insufficient collation and use of performance data to enable effective tracking of pupils' progress.
- Boys' performance in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory.

### Commentary

120. On entry, pupils' standards in geography are well below the national average with pupils exhibiting weak geographical knowledge and skills. The number of pupils who achieve Level 5 and above, based on teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, is still below the national average. Boys, in particular, underachieve with approximately a third of the cohort failing to achieve Level 5. However, this is an improving picture and achievement is satisfactory as a result of good lesson planning, differentiated tasks and focused activities. This progress was evident in a Year 9 class where pupils were able to explain why population was increasing rapidly in some countries and the impact of this growth. The class was able to use geographical terminology accurately.
121. GCSE examination results have improved since the last inspection and in 2004 the performance of pupils was in line with the national average. The average points score in geography is above the school average. Standards seen in Year 11 are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, boys, in particular, improve because of the use of well-defined tasks and a structured and supportive approach to fieldwork.
122. Students with special educational needs generally progress satisfactorily and are given individual help and their needs identified in lesson planning. The oral skills of pupils are satisfactory but there is not sufficient use of more open-ended questions to enhance geographical understanding. The quality of written work is unsatisfactory and could be supported by the use of writing frames.
123. Overall, from Years 7 to 11, teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best teaching and learning is where teachers plan carefully and set clear targets. This learning involves pupils' active participation and the use of well-prepared resource materials. A successful Year 10 lesson on urban land use models enabled students to use a wide range of resources and required them to think analytically and apply their theoretical knowledge to their own town.
124. In Years 7 to 11, there are a number of students whose behaviour is challenging. They are generally managed successfully. The department has worked hard to develop a variety of teaching methods and behaviour management strategies that can be used to ensure effective teaching. However, when teaching is not so well planned and the lesson lacks challenge, then the learning is not always satisfactory.
125. The lack of fieldwork opportunities, especially in Years 7 to 9, has a negative impact on pupils' motivation and their understanding of the relevance to geographical study. The use of ICT is underdeveloped as a result of limited facilities within the department. This means that the

range of teaching and learning styles that can be adopted is restricted and has an impact on progress.

126. Assessment data is used inconsistently. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are not always aware of their target grades and what they need to do to improve. The tracking of pupils' performance in all years is embryonic and needs further development.
127. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader has a clear vision and has brought about changes in the teaching methods but is aware that there are still a number of important issues to address. The teachers in the department are effective and are mutually supportive. At the time of the last inspection, geography was unsatisfactory and since that time, progress has been good and standards are rising.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent GCSE results have been well below the national average.
- Standards currently are satisfactory and numbers opting to take the subject in Years 10 and 11 have improved significantly.
- Appropriate action is being taken to improve examination results this year.
- More accuracy is needed in assessing pupils' work, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- The issue of the leadership of the subject needs to be resolved.

### Commentary

128. In GCSE in 2004, results were well below the national average. Girls did better than boys, but the number of pupils entered was relatively small. In 2003, results were also below the national average with a similarly small number of candidates entered. In the national assessments at the end of Year 9, pupils achieved results in line with what is usually found. The number of pupils currently studying history in Years 10 and 11 is now much greater and better GCSE results are anticipated this year.
129. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards by the end of Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress as a result of the effective teaching methods adopted by their teachers and the appropriate range of resources provided for them. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils enter the school with below average attainment in literacy skills and shortcomings in their writing persist throughout Years 7 to 9 with the result that the quality of written work in history does not fully reflect their capabilities. Evidence of pupils' sound achievement is much better seen in their oral contributions in lessons and in their shorter written responses to structured questions. Strengths include their interpretation of historical sources where higher attaining pupils demonstrate good ability in analysing the validity of a variety of visual and written material.
130. In Years 10 and 11, standards and achievement are again satisfactory. Pupils in Year 11 were able to use sources to make critical assessments of Stalin's economic policies and the outcomes of the war in Vietnam. They were able to formulate an argument and organise evidence to support it. They showed a good understanding of the requirements of the examination that they are due to take in the summer. The department has carefully analysed the reasons for its disappointing results in 2004 and has responded to this in its teaching. Particular work has been done to raise the standards of the pupils with predicted grades on the C/D borderline to ensure that their coursework is of sufficient quality to merit at least a grade C. Pupils' coursework now shows attainment that is in line with what is expected. Revision sessions are planned during the Easter holiday.

131. Pupils have positive attitudes to history. They apply themselves in lessons and their exercise books and folders show steady application in the longer term. This reflects the positive qualities of the teaching which is well organised so that lessons are conducted with a sense of purpose. The quality of teaching is sound overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expect pupils to take their work seriously. The quality of assessment in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory, however, and more accuracy is needed to enable pupils to know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. There are signs of improved planning, including approaches to assessment, especially in Years 10, and 11 and this should ensure improved GCSE results in the future.
132. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily, although there remains a need to recruit a full-time subject leader. Those responsible at present are committed to improving standards, however, and are determined to improve on last year's disappointing results. The significantly improved take-up for the subject in Years 10 and 11 also reflects well on the positive leadership being provided. A renewed enthusiasm for the subject is reflected in the reintroduction of trips to places of historical interest. Resources and accommodation are adequate. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory on the whole.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory; they achieve better with some teachers than others.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory; there is not enough structure to support the learning of all pupils.
- Pupils' achievement has been limited by staff absence and resources.
- Statutory requirements are not met.

#### **Commentary**

133. Pupils' standards on entry are below average and they remain below average at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 and 2004 were well below the national average and below the school's own average. They were just below the national average in 2003. Nevertheless, pupils taking food technology regularly outperform those taking graphics and resistant materials in examinations and in lessons.
134. By the end of Year 9, achievement is unsatisfactory. Those pupils who are motivated often achieve good quality outcomes. However, there is insufficient structure in many lessons to ensure that all pupils achieve equally well. By the end of Year 11, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory because too many pupils, mainly boys, lack the motivation to achieve as well as they might. They do not perceive that the work is relevant for them and they experience little success. Girls succeed well because they work diligently on their projects and their work is carefully presented. The absence rate is high in some lessons.
135. There is some very good teaching in food technology and some good teaching in resistant materials and graphics. However, overall, it is unsatisfactory due to the lack of support for the lower achieving pupils. Over time, this leads to unsatisfactory learning and achievement. Additionally, there is a long-term staff absence in the food department. In the very best lessons, there is a clear beginning, middle and end to the lessons to reinforce learning. Well focused and challenging questioning ensures that everyone is engaged at an appropriate level. There are challenging tasks that require all pupils to be involved. The teacher checks pupils' understanding and rectifies their misconceptions. Teachers give detailed feedback about strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, pupils are confident about how to carry out tasks and modify their work systematically to make it better.

136. However, in too many lessons, there are significant weaknesses. Too much teacher talk denies pupils opportunities to contribute and to investigate activities for themselves. Teachers demonstrate new skills well. However, they do not ensure that all pupils are paying attention and they make too little use of questions to check their understanding. New learning is not sufficiently well reinforced throughout lessons. As a result, some pupils become confused and bored. Although teachers give feedback to pupils verbally, they do not always help them to understand how to improve. Assessment data is used to predict levels and grades from one key stage to the next. However, ongoing assessments are not related to learning outcomes from lessons or the requirements of the National Curriculum. There is, therefore, a weak relationship between the pupils' predicted and their actual grades and levels.
137. Leadership is entirely satisfactory. The new head of department has initiated some significant improvements. The department is now working as a team, the environment for learning has been enhanced, and the schemes of work are being revised. Nevertheless, many of the issues identified at the time of the last inspection are still live and improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Management, therefore, is unsatisfactory. There are gaps in the curriculum because statutory requirements are not met. There is a lack of resources for teaching ICT, including CAD/CAM, and too little emphasis on systems and control.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Good and occasionally very good teaching leads to good learning and high achievement; and enables pupils to develop as independent learners.
- Good leadership and good management have steered the department through difficult times and are currently driving up standards.
- Boys are significantly underperforming in examinations.
- The positive attitudes and good behaviour of the majority of pupils effectively support the positive, relaxed and purposeful learning environment.
- Opportunities to explore the innovative field of digital art with pupils are missed.
- Resources for printmaking and ceramics are insufficient to meet the needs of the curriculum in those areas.

#### **Commentary**

138. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below the national expectation. Pupils arrive at the school, having had a variable experience of art in their primary schools, at a standard well below national expectations. The well-planned curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9 ensures that pupils make good progress in learning art skills, working in a variety of media and researching the work of well-chosen artists and art movements from different cultures and historical periods. The number of pupils gaining the higher GCSE grades A\*-C 2004 was significantly lower than national averages, although girls' results were very much better and closer to national averages. Over the past two years boys have performed far below girls, although they have made a small gain on 2003. In lessons seen, standards are satisfactory.
139. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. The good and occasionally very good teaching leads to good learning and appropriately high achievements, giving a clear indication that standards in the department are rising. The department's targets for the current year underline the inspection evidence on this. Teachers have a very good command of their subject and their high expectations of good behaviour ensure that the environment for learning is relaxed and purposeful, enabling good achievement. A particular strength of teaching is the



encouragement towards independent learning, which grows through the school. Teachers are diligent in giving and marking homework and there is a good response to this, particularly in the earlier years. Pupils are generally well behaved and positive towards their art lessons, enabling lessons to proceed in a relaxed, orderly and enjoyable way. On occasion, the behaviour of a small number of Year 9 boys is challenging and takes up teaching time, to the detriment of others.

140. The department benefits from good, supportive leadership and good management. It has made a satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, in particular, the quality of teaching and learning and the cultural input to the curriculum. The head of department has introduced practices and curriculum innovations that are intended to motivate boys to achieve better; there is evidence of some success with this in Years 7, 8 and 9. The lack of well-developed programmes of digital art is a weakness that has more impact on boys. The barely satisfactory department computer resources and the lack of staff training in digital art are key factors in holding up digital art innovations. Good use is made of the Internet and word processing.
141. Accommodation is satisfactory, but in need of refurbishment. Storage is poor and leads to clutter in the art rooms. Tools and resources for ceramics and printmaking are insufficient to meet the needs of the curriculum, although books and other secondary resources are very good. The very good displays of quality work around the school add richness and colour to the overall presentation of the school.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Standards have improved since the last inspection.
- Teaching, learning and pupils' achievement are very good.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Provision for ICT in Years 7 to 9 is inadequate.
- Extra-curricular music makes an impressive contribution to the culture of the school and community.

## **Commentary**

142. Standards have risen since the last inspection. Pupils' standards on entry in Year 7 are in line with national expectations but by the end of Year 9, as teacher assessments indicate, they are above average. The general trend in GCSE results is an improving one, both in the grades awarded and the number of candidates. The last inspection recorded just ten candidates over a four-year period, with just over a third achieving A\* to C grades. In contrast, in the last four years, there were 40 candidates, of whom four-fifths gained A\* to C grades. This is well above the national average. In two of those years, all the candidates gained A\* to C grades. In the current Years 10 and 11, there are over 50 pupils, indicating the increasing popularity of the subject. The standard of their work is good. The performing and composing skills of Year 11 are well above average.
143. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' achievement overall is very good. Since their entry to the school, Year 7 pupils' practical skills and use of musical vocabulary have advanced considerably. Their research into brass instruments helped contribute to a very good lesson on the theme of 'War and Peace'. By Year 9, around four-fifths of pupils are working at Level 5 or above; this compares with two-thirds nationally, according to teacher assessments. The progress made over the three years is considerable. The achievement across Years 10 to 11 is also very good. There is a marked rise in the standard of work produced in Year 11 compared to Year

10. However, Year 10 work well and are making steady progress as their teachers constantly challenge them to work to their potential. Boys and girls perform equally well and pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

144. Teaching and learning are very good. They are underpinned in lessons by an excellent system of classroom management, adhered to by all three music staff, who have very good subject knowledge. All teaching observed during the inspection was at least good, and mostly very good. Pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing. In addition to teacher assessments, pupils evaluate their own and each other's work against descriptions linked to the National Curriculum levels. Throughout the inspection, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were excellent. They work well together, whether as a whole class, in small groups, pairs or individually. This was seen in a Year 8 lesson, where pupils in small groups were working on their own rhythmic compositions in various corners of the department. All groups were absorbed on their set task, even when unsupervised. Homework is used in all year groups to support learning and as a contribution towards the next lesson. This is taken seriously by pupils, who possess good musical vocabulary and research skills. High levels of interest, knowledge and enthusiasm are shown in all lessons. In a Year 9 class, two pupils demonstrated with precision the music they had composed to fit a section of animated film. The teacher then demonstrated to them and the class how they could improve still further by playing additional material alongside them. This was a very good technique and rewarding for the whole class. The use of keyboards without headphones in Years 7 to 9 can be a problem when pupils are in close proximity to each other. It affects the quality of learning, as pupils are trying to perform and compose surrounded by the sounds coming from their fellow pupils' instruments. The use of ICT is underdeveloped in Years 7 to 9.
145. At GCSE, pupils have covered a wide variety of musical styles in depth. Their files, work books and recordings show that the teaching is well structured and rigorous; nothing is left to chance. The learning of Year 10 pupils was very good in a lesson on the rhythmic structure of Indian raga. This was due to the classroom teacher building upon the previous homework exercise, coupled with varied approaches to performing tasks and detailed questioning related to the topic. Year 11 pupils have produced impressive compositions for saxophone quartet, using a score-writing program. Subsequently, these pieces have been recorded live. To supplement classroom lessons, GCSE pupils attend weekly after-school sessions at Haileybury College. There are also weekend and holiday GCSE workshops available.
146. The leadership and management of music are excellent. The high standards of pupils' work and the remarkable ethos which surrounds the subject are the result of music being well led and managed. The subject handbook and policy documents are a model for any department. These are clearly not bureaucratic exercises but are put into practice with vigour and the full support of all music staff. Within the faculty of performing arts, teachers observe each other teaching and regularly share good practice. Music is involved in many initiatives. The school has achieved Artsmark Gold award. It is working with the Institute for Education and Paul Hamlyn Foundation on the Musical Futures Project. This is a hands-on approach for two Year 9 classes, working in the same way that pop musicians learn. The project is designed to investigate how pupils can take control of their own learning and addresses the low take-up of music nationally after Year 9. It demonstrated high motivation and very good progress in lessons.
147. The extra-curricular opportunities are another strength of music. There is a large band, wind group, choir, senior choir, jazz group, rock band and brass group. Around eight per cent of pupils have instrumental lessons in school, though only a quarter of these play orchestral instruments. There are a number of performance events during the year, both at the school and in the wider community. During the inspection, pupils were performing in the Broxbourne Festival. Last year, 50 pupils in the woodwind group, choir and jazz group went on a four-day tour of Belgium.

148. The last inspection showed a significant improvement on the previous report. The overall trend is still rising; improvement is good. Considerable progress has been made in raising standards, GCSE entry numbers, pupils' attitudes and expectations. Owing to excellent classroom management, poor behaviour is rarely an issue. The opportunities for extra-curricular involvement have widened and A-Level has been introduced. The GCSE curriculum is now well documented and assessment is a significant support to learning. Resources are generally satisfactory. World music remains a strong feature of schemes of work from Years 7 to 11, but there are too few appropriate instruments to support these projects. As at the last inspection, the provision for ICT in Years 7 to 9 is inadequate. Accommodation is unsatisfactory due to an inadequate number of specialist teaching rooms with sufficient storage and soundproofing.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education (PE) is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is good teaching in all years.
- GCSE results are excellent.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Assessment systems are very good.
- Extra-curricular activities are excellent.
- Changing accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

149. Standards overall at Key Stage 3 are satisfactory. At Key Stage 4, standards overall are good. Discussion of the levels achieved by the pupils enables teachers to determine current standards and identify what the pupils need to do to improve. GCSE results in 2004 were excellent, significantly above national results for PE. The achievement of girls was particularly impressive.
150. Achievement overall is good, the majority of the pupils make good progress. Pupils enjoy their lessons, feel they are improving their skills, and look forward to representing the school in sport. In a Year 9 life-saving lesson, the majority of pupils were successful in completing a variety of rescue scenarios while working in small groups. The department has a very good assessment system and is able to monitor achievement through the very effective use of ICT with data on all pupils allowing them to track individual students across all PE activities.
151. Overall standards of teaching are good, and sometimes very good and excellent. Teaching methods are imaginative and lead to a high level of interest from students. Adults relate well to students and expect them to work hard, but the level of challenge is realistic and students are usually always productive. Organisation, control and instructions are clear and efficient, with standards of discipline firm but fair. The active participation in the delivery of lessons by the students is a key feature of almost all PE lessons at the school, and one which motivates and inspires the young people to achieve.
152. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for what he wants to achieve at the school. Overall, the quality of departmental documentation is very good. The department handbook in particular is a very useful document which ensures consistent practice across the department, helping standards to rise. The PE department, community coaches and the students themselves provide an excellent range of extra-curricular activities open to students of all abilities. These are very popular and well supported.

153. Overall the PE accommodation and facilities are satisfactory. However the gym changing rooms, including the showers, are currently unsatisfactory. The pavilion is in a very poor state of repair, with both changing areas, toilets and shower areas needing a total refurbishment.
154. Provision for PE and sport at the school has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. Teaching is consistently good or better at both key stages and GCSE results are excellent. Extra-curricular provision is excellent and many pupils achieve a high standard in sport.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

Business and other vocational courses were not inspected in the main school.

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

A programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is provided for all pupils and is taught largely by their tutors. It is a coherent, well-structured course. No lessons were observed during the inspection but samples of pupils' work show satisfactory standards being achieved.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils enjoy their lessons and are beginning to become active citizens.
- Teaching and learning are sound.
- The co-ordinator provides clear leadership in developing the course and ensuring all subjects contribute to pupils' knowledge and understanding.

### **Commentary**

155. Citizenship is taught as part of the school's personal, social, health and citizenship programme. Standards of achievement in Years 9 and 11 are satisfactory. Pupils know about strategies to address bullying, aspects of rights and responsibilities, combating drug abuse and how laws are made in parliament. In September 2004, pupils in Year 11 began a GCSE short course in this subject for the first time. In 2005, the first pupils to have taken this programme will be entered and are expected to do well. The quality of girls' written evaluation of their work in the 'Participating in Society' unit is higher than the boys'. Pupils in the lower achieving groups make satisfactory progress due to the support they receive from their teachers.
156. Pupils make satisfactory gains in the knowledge and understanding required in becoming informed citizens. They also develop appropriate skills to participate in society and form an understanding of how to behave responsibly. Good active citizenship is fostered throughout the school for pupils to take responsibility for helping others, for example, through the buddy reading scheme, charity work and the year and school councils. Citizenship makes a good contribution to the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
157. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. No lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 could be seen during the inspection as they are taught on Fridays but samples of pupils' work show learning to be satisfactory overall. Work is assessed and appropriate feedback informs pupils of what they need to do to improve. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils in groups constructed paper towers under the leadership of one of the group and this enabled them to identify different styles of leadership as an introduction to studying democracy. Pupils' attitudes were positive. In Year 11, coursework is assessed effectively and makes a contribution to the grade achieved in the GCSE examination.

158. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced citizenship as a discrete subject for all pupils. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a clear view of how the subject needs to develop. He works in partnership with the co-ordinator for PSHE and offers good support to others who teach the subject. This includes the form tutors who usually teach the course in Years 7 to 9 and members of the more specialist team who teach the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. The subject co-ordinator has identified the opportunities in all subjects to cover aspects of citizenship and pupils have been given a well-constructed profile sheet for them to record their citizenship skills. This sheet is not used by all teachers and could be adopted more widely.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 15 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	4	50.0	78.3	25.0	21.6	20.0	28.5
Biology	8	75.0	63.5	0.0	10.4	20.0	19.8
Chemistry	5	80.0	70.3	20.0	13.2	26.0	23.0
Communication Studies	6	100.0	87.2	50.0	24.9	46.7	32.8
Drama	1	100.0	86.6	100.0	19.8	60.0	30.9
English Literature	7	100.0	86.2	14.3	17.4	32.9	29.7
Design and Technology	9	55.6	72.6	0.0	13.9	14.4	24.3
Geography	4	25.0	75.5	0.0	20.4	5.0	27.0
History	1	100.0	82.2	0.0	20.8	30.0	29.2
Information and Communication Technology	10	20.0	66.6	0.0	8.8	6.0	20.6
Mathematics	3	33.3	59.9	0.0	14.1	6.7	20.5
Music	1	100.0	79.8	0.0	16.9	30.0	27.5
Other Social Studies	6	33.3	67.8	0.0	15.1	10.0	23.2
Physics	0	N/a	66.4	N/a	14.8	N/a	22.4
Religious Studies	1	100.0	82.2	0.0	26.1	20.0	31.2

Sociology	6	50.0	72.1	33.3	19.6	23.3	25.9
Sports/PE Studies	2	100.0	72.2	0.0	11.8	30.0	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	4	100.0	98.3	0.0	50.2	50.0	87.1
Biology	4	100.0	96.6	25.0	40.0	75.0	79.3
Chemistry	1	100.0	97.7	0.0	50.0	40.0	85.7
Communication Studies	14	100.0	99.2	42.9	40.4	88.6	83.5
Drama	6	100.0	99.6	66.7	42.8	90.0	85.1
English Literature	6	100.0	99.4	50.0	44.9	83.3	85.5
Design and Technology	2	50.0	97.8	0.0	35.0	30.0	77.9
Geography	3	100.0	98.8	66.7	46.4	86.7	85.2
History	12	91.7	99.0	8.3	45.6	60.0	85.1
Information and Communication Technology	3	100.0	96.3	0.0	25.7	73.3	71.1
Mathematics	2	100.0	96.8	0.0	56.6	60.0	89.5
Music	3	100.0	98.2	100.0	37.1	106.7	79.5
Other Social Studies	2	100.0	97.4	0.0	42.5	50.0	81.6
Physics	0	N/a	96.7	N/a	45.3	N/a	82.6
Religious Studies	3	100.0	99.1	0.0	49.5	60.0	87.4
Sociology	9	100.0	98.5	33.3	45.3	80.0	84.6
Sports/PE Studies	3	100.0	97.8	0.0	30.9	53.3	75.4
VCE Business	9	100.0	91.6	0.0	24.1	71.1	67.9

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

### **English**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers know their subject well.
- The range of teaching strategies used is limited and leads to restricted learning opportunities for students.
- Students have good attitudes to learning.
- Examination results are in line with the national average.

## **Commentary**

159. In the 2004 AS level examination, results were slightly above the national average. Boys' performance exceeded the national average and is better than that of the girls overall. However, the numbers taking examinations in English Literature are very small. Results have been similar for the last three years. At A2 level, results are satisfactory. Only six pupils entered and none of them were boys. The work seen during the inspection is satisfactory. The range meets the demands of the course but standards are variable and range from above average to well below.
160. Students achieve the grades in line with teachers' predictions and make satisfactory progress from their GCSE course. More able students could achieve the highest levels but are not stretched and only make satisfactory progress. Boys are better able to construct a good essay, show greater evidence of independent research skills and make better progress than girls. All students make good use of ICT to write essays and prepare notes for distribution in lessons to support presentations. Student files are useful resources for revision. Because the literacy skills of those taking the A-level course are generally good, the students are able to meet the requirements of the examination. However, the very good oral skills of some students are not capitalised on and the opportunity for greater achievement is sometimes missed. These students are achieving more highly in some other subjects, for example, media studies. The attitude and commitment of students is good and they enjoy the subject. Because of this, more able students make the most of the learning opportunities and discuss independently of the teacher and rehearse their ideas, and this contributes to some good achievement of certain individuals.
161. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Students enjoy their lessons and work hard because teachers know their subjects well. Lessons are very pleasant and pupils have very positive relationships with the teachers. The approach to teaching is fairly limited; however, pupils do have ample opportunities to discuss their thoughts and ideas. In a good Year 13 lesson, a group had been presenting their ideas about the characters in 'Postcards' by Annie Proulx and engaged confidently in a wide-ranging discussion feeding off each other's ideas and only occasionally did the teacher interject to move the discussion on.
162. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department is new to the school and has a strong commitment to raising standards. He is aware that recruitment to the subject is small and the recruitment of boys to the subject is variable. The low number of boys entered for GCSE English Literature may be contributing to the small intake. The team of teachers is strong and they know their subject well. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection and, with the commitment of the department to the emerging vision of the head of department, there is capacity to improve.

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

Students' literacy skills are largely sound and enable them to meet the demands of the A-level curriculum in English. However, in some subjects, the intake criteria are relaxed and a few students lack the skills to express their thinking in writing. In some subjects, like drama and media studies, very good support is given to students to enhance their writing skills and there is practice in these departments that is of value across the school.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Examination results are in line with students' predictions.
- Teaching is good.
- Students have good attitudes to learning.
- Learning approaches are too narrow and the contexts through which mathematics is taught are limited.

### **Commentary**

163. In the A-level examination in 2004, both students gained a pass grade. This represents satisfactory achievement relative to their performance in GCSE examinations. A-level results over recent years have been average. The standards of the current Year 13 students are average and they are achieving well relative to their performance at GCSE. Their AS-level examination results recorded for the eight students in 2004 were below average. The standards of the current Year 12 students are average but they are achieving in line with their relative performances at GCSE.
164. Standards of work seen during the inspection were consistent with expectations for this stage of the course. Because students enter Year 12 with a sound base of mathematical knowledge and understanding gained at GCSE, they bridge the gap to AS-level relatively well. In a good Year 13 lesson, both students investigating a different aspect of mathematics independently did so with much enthusiasm, deepening their knowledge and understanding of the application of differentiation to finding the maximum volume of a box.
165. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The use of good subject knowledge, coupled with well-planned lessons, ensures that the teaching of the theory and principles of mathematics is sound. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is transmitted to the students. All lessons seen are characterised by very good relationships and collaborative learning. Together with their good attitudes, this enables students to approach tasks with increasing confidence, often resulting in good achievement in lessons. However, there are not enough occasions for students to widen their learning approaches, such as through open-ended tasks. Students are aware of their progress through the assessment of their work and discussion in class but would like more guidance on how to improve.
166. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has a clear vision for the development of the subject at this level. There is a strong team of experienced and knowledgeable teachers. There is, however, limited use of practical activities and ICT to support learning and the contexts in which mathematics is applied should be extended. Students are very appreciative of the time teachers give them outside lessons. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection and there is the capacity to improve further.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

Students' mathematical knowledge and skills are sufficiently well developed for the needs of their chosen courses. For example, in business studies, students understand and effectively interpret information and statistical data. In chemistry, students are able to evaluate formulae correctly.



## **SCIENCE**

In the sixth form, biology and chemistry are offered to students but no physics teaching is available.

### **Biology**

Provision in biology is **good**.

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

- Good teaching has resulted in good achievement.
- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject give students greater confidence in lessons.
- Challenge and expectation are high.

#### **Commentary**

167. Standards are average by Year 13. Students enter the course with below average standards with over half having grade C at GCSE. Although numbers taking A-level biology in 2004 were small, results were in line with national averages and have improved over recent years. Standards in class are in line with expectations and represent good achievement. Boys and girls make similar progress. This achievement is largely due to good teaching and good use of resources.
168. Teaching and learning are good. Although one teacher is new to teaching biology at A-level, all teachers are very knowledgeable about the subject. Most teachers enthuse students, who then acquire good skills and understanding. Students have good practical skills; they work safely and with a great sense of purpose. Students' work is marked well and teachers challenge students to attain higher grades. This expectation enables students to improve their grades. Students are encouraged to become responsible as independent learners through well-planned exercises.
169. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is an effective leader. She has good vision for improving the department and has sustained good achievement. There are very good teaching resources. Students make good progress in lessons because of good management of teachers and resources. Students' performance is monitored carefully so that teachers can give targeted assistance to those who may be underachieving. Teachers work as an effective team and they are supported well.
170. Accommodation and resources are good. Laboratories are maintained well and there are good safeguards in place to enable students to work safely. Resources are good and are sufficient to provide good facilities for students' investigational work. The technicians prepare and maintain these resources very well.
171. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection as standards have been maintained at an average level.

### **Chemistry**

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

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

- Good collaboration with a local school has resulted in good achievement.
- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject give students greater confidence in lessons.

- Challenge and expectation are high and students are highly motivated.

### Commentary

172. Standards are average. Students enter the course with below average standards. Numbers of students taking A-level chemistry in 2004 were too small to make a judgement about national comparisons in examinations, but standards in class are in line with expectations and represent good achievement. This achievement is largely due to good teaching. Boys and girls make similar progress.
173. Teaching and learning are good. The school employs teachers from a neighbouring school to teach chemistry in the sixth form. These teachers are very knowledgeable about the chemistry they teach. They prepare good worksheets and exercises that challenge and extend students' learning. Students are enthusiastic and they acquire good skills and understanding with confidence. They have very good practical skills and carry out experiments safely. Students are helped to improve their grades through helpful comments on their work.
174. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is an effective leader liaising well with the teachers from the nearby school so that they feel part of the team.
175. Accommodation and resources are good. Lack of interactive whiteboards seriously hampers teachers' ability to use ICT teaching resources. Other resources are good and are sufficient to provide good facilities for students' investigation work. The technicians are highly competent and their work is much appreciated by teachers. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- An appropriate examinations course is available.
- Students are well supported and generally succeed.

### Commentary

176. In 2003, four students were entered for ICT at Level A2 and three passed. In the same year, 16 students in Year 12 entered at AVCE AS level and nine passed. These numbers are too small for comparisons with national pass rates to be valid but in general those students who choose to study A-level ICT and who work diligently generally succeed. Achievement is satisfactory with students realising the potential they had demonstrated in their GNVQ examinations. Two of the successful A2 students had not attempted GNVQ when in Years 10 and 11. Students' maturity and their opportunity for extensive support in small groups mean that they can succeed.
177. Standards of attainment are satisfactory. Students in a sixth form class demonstrated the database applications being completed for their course work. These revealed that they had developed a good understanding of the way that data must be structured in such applications as a simple domestic accounts package or the system needed by a rental shop. Students had a good grasp of the user interface that their applications needed. Some submitted course work was extensive in its detail and presented with great care and pride.
178. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Staff have a good command of their subject area. Students are well directed with their learning and produce interesting and well executed pieces of work. The close relationship between teachers and students in the small groups meets their various learning needs.

179. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. There is good vision for how the subject should be taught at A-level and the AVCE course has been successfully introduced. Students are well supported with a clear programme of planned work. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory with the introduction of an A-level programme that leads students to success.

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

The position in the sixth form mirrors that pertaining in the main school. Media studies provide an excellent model of the way that computer technology can support learning with professional software and video equipment used by students to create and edit films. In drama also, good use is made of cameras to record activities and software is used for the creation of lighting plans and captions. Although students use computers extensively for the development of their course work, overall, the introduction of ICT into sixth form teaching and learning is underdeveloped and is unsatisfactory.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

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

- Teaching is well structured.
- Teachers are working hard to enable students to work independently.
- Fieldwork is not sufficiently developed.
- The transition from GCSE to AS is not sufficiently supported.
- There is insufficient use of ICT.

#### **Commentary**

180. In 2003/2004, there were no Year 12 students but there were three Year 13 students entered for Advanced level. The results obtained were two grade B's and one C. Although it is not possible to compare them to national statistics due to the small size of the cohort, the results were good.

181. This academic year there is only a Year 12 AS group and the standard of the students' work was below expectations for the course. The group is small and only has four students. Most of the students have found the transition from GCSE to AS level challenging. In some cases, their background knowledge is lacking and their ability to analyse and put forward their views is restricted. However, students are starting to develop satisfactory research skills and achievement in the lessons was satisfactory.

182. The lessons were well planned and executed and, in human geography, the teaching provided opportunities for the students to develop skills of independent learning. The students had been asked to carry out some research of a sub Saharan country and consider how the country fitted a model for economic development. Some produced high quality research materials and applied their theoretical knowledge to their case study successfully. Others found the task very challenging as a result of their lack of careful preparation prior to the lesson. The lack of availability of ICT resources within the department restricts the development of independent learning.

183. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers take account of prior knowledge and lessons are clearly designed to meet the needs of students. Teachers have realistic

expectations and through probing questions they constantly challenge the students to develop their arguments and raise achievement.

184. Some of the students recently visited New York and had opportunities to do some observational fieldwork. This had a positive impact on their attitude and commitment to the subject. Additional fieldwork opportunities need to be developed in order to promote the subject, raise achievement and encourage more students to study geography in the sixth form.
185. Insufficient use is made of assessment data to track the performance of students and set targets for improvement.
186. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader recognises the profile of the subject needs to be raised if the long-term future of the subject is to be guaranteed. Issues relating to the timing of module examination entries need to be addressed as opportunities to maximise students' performance are being overlooked at the present time. The January modules are not used at present to provide valuable feedback on achievement and help students' motivation.

## **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' achievements and the teaching are very good.
- Students, many of whom have modest GCSE grades, make very good progress.
- Students have very positive attitudes to history.

### **Commentary**

187. The numbers taking A-level vary significantly from one year to another. In the current Year 13, there are no candidates for examination in 2005; in Year 12, there are eight students. Results in 2004 were positive generally with all but one of the 12 students obtaining a pass, but there were few high grades; boys did better than girls. In 2003, there were five students with two achieving passes with A or B grades. The numbers of candidates in different years are too small to provide reliable comparisons.
188. Achievement in the current Year 12 is very good as a result of some very good teaching. Most of the students have relatively modest GCSE grades, but are making very good progress to meet the standards required. Their work on the constitutional crisis in 17<sup>th</sup> century Britain shows good awareness of complex issues and demonstrates a confident use of historical vocabulary. They are able to discuss various interpretations of the events of the period and have a sound understanding of the historiography involved. They can use different types of sources to reach well-supported judgements. This was well demonstrated in a lesson, where they analysed sources concerning Charles 1 and the Irish Rebellion. Written work is well-structured and shows evidence of good progress since the start of the course. In the work on Bolshevism, there is a good balance between more structured responses and more independent writing.
189. Students' attitudes are very good. They show a very good sense of purpose and clearly enjoy the work. They relate well to one another and respect each other's contributions. The very good teaching is well reflected in the way students approach the subject and in the very good progress that they make. Expectations are very high, but the subject is taught in a way which makes it enjoyable and interesting: the level of challenge is very well judged. Students are encouraged very positively and the work is managed imaginatively to enable everyone to grow in confidence and believe that they can succeed. Every lesson begins with a short test,

marking is regular and the teacher provides detailed feedback which helps students to improve.

190. The subject is well led and managed. Planning is thorough and there is a good range of resources to support the teaching. Comparisons with the last inspection report are not appropriate, given that there were very few students taking the subject at that time.

## **Sociology**

Provision in sociology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' achievement in sociology is good.
- Students are well supported by good teaching.
- There is very good guidance and support for individuals.

## **Commentary**

191. Numbers taking the subject in recent years have varied and have usually been relatively small. In 2004, nine students took the A level examination and all passed, with three obtaining A or B grades. Girls did better than the boys, although given the small numbers, it is not possible to draw conclusions from this. More significantly, the students did well in sociology compared to the other subjects they took. In 2003, all seven candidates passed, with one achieving a higher grade.
192. Standards in the present Year 13 group are satisfactory and students are likely to perform creditably in the summer's examination. Given that many students have modest GCSE grades, they are achieving well. Students display confidence in the use of concepts and specialist language. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, they were able to lead presentations on various theories of crime and deviance making reference to key writers. They accomplished this with a measure of critical awareness which enabled them to evaluate different perspectives successfully. This is also a good example of how the subject helps students to become more confident speakers in formal situations. The written work of Year 12 students on education demonstrated good progress after only six months studying sociology.
193. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and students are encouraged to take responsibility. A very supportive framework is provided which encourages students to think for themselves. Guidance is given on the development of appropriate study skills. Students have very good attitudes to the subject and are supportive of each other's efforts. Sociology has a very good reputation in the sixth form and is one of the more popular subjects studied. The teacher has excellent subject knowledge and is very experienced. The way students are supported in undertaking coursework assignments is very good, with regular opportunities for them to receive individual guidance in one-to-one sessions. Marking is done very conscientiously and feedback is very good.
194. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader provides a strong sense of direction and understands well how to inspire interest and enthusiasm. He provides a good range of course materials and has a link with the London School of Economics which helps to widen students' horizons. Schemes of work and other documentation are thorough and supportive.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

This subject was sampled.

195. Two design and technology lessons were observed, both in Year 12. Teaching and learning were satisfactory. Students have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of design. They worked competently on the manufacture of mood lights based on the style of art deco or the Bauhaus. They modified their designs thoughtfully in the light of manufacturing constraints. They had a good knowledge of the vocabulary of the subject and used it accurately to comment and analyse. Teaching was satisfactory and one-to-one support was effective. Students' knowledge of materials and processes is limited because all but one achieved a pass in graphics, rather than resistant materials, in the GCSE. Students do not make enough use of ICT to carry out processes, for example, when designing and to present their work. There are no Year 13 students this year.

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

196. A small sample of music lessons was seen during the inspection. A-Level has been introduced in recent years. With only five candidates since 2002, student numbers are low. However, standards are high with four-fifths achieving an A or B grade at AS Level, with the three who continued studying gaining an A or B at A2. There is just one student in the present sixth form taking AS Level music.

197. In an A-Level lesson, the teacher used an impressive range of techniques and approaches in an integrated lesson on serialism. From high level questioning on the structure and the aural sensation of Webern's Quartet, it proceeded to the student playing the clarinet part from the work in a variety of ways. He then devised his own rhythmic cell cards and tone row under the teacher's guidance and skilful questioning. Finally, he performed the tone row and stored it on computer for further development.

198. Dance is offered as a Btec Level 3 qualification within the performing arts faculty leading to a national diploma. It has attracted nine students in Years 12 and 13. The course has been running for eight years and the structure does not have a final examination.

199. One lesson was observed of a tap class, a new skill which students had been learning for only four weeks. The standards achieved by the students were very good due to the excellent subject knowledge of the teacher. She had high expectations which she reinforced through detailed feedback which helped students to practise and improve their steps. They consolidated their knowledge through recording dance vocabulary in their notebooks. The lesson proceeded at a brisk pace and students' confidence increased due to the teacher's excellent skills in demonstrating how to execute each part of the dance sequence. Students were helped to assess their own and others' performances so that by the end of the lesson they were able to perform a short combination of at least three different steps they had choreographed themselves. Teaching and learning were very good.

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good teaching enables students to explore a wide range of art experiences independently and creatively.
- Very good leadership and good management of a strong team lead to a department that is improving and raising standards.
- Single lessons leave insufficient time for students to organise and develop their work effectively within the allocated time.

- The very positive attitudes and very good behaviour of students lead to positive, enjoyable and industrious lessons.
- Accommodation is barely satisfactory for the growing numbers opting for advanced level courses, although the dedicated area is valued by students.

### Commentary

200. There were too few students taking advanced level examinations in 2004 to enable a fair judgement to be made against national averages, although there was individual high attainment, in particular, amongst female students. From work seen during the inspection, standards are in line with course expectations by the end of Year 13, which indicates good progress, since entry standards to the sixth form are below national averages.
201. The very good teaching, evident during the inspection, leaves students free to explore and develop their own ideas within examination guidelines, whilst the excellent command that teachers have of their subject ensures that students' research is well informed and guided. Teaching and learning are too restricted within a single lesson and this affects the continuity of learning in a practical subject that needs a high level of application to individual pieces of work. The behaviour of students is exemplary and their positive attitudes and commitment to their work ensure that lessons are pleasant, positive and rich with mature reflection and discussion with the teacher. Most students respond well to the challenge of independent research and development, showing creative energy that is put to effective use in their work. Teachers give quality time to students, enabling them to critically evaluate their own work and track down secondary resources to support their studies. The annotation of work is very good, in particular, amongst female students, and work is well presented. Work is very individual and students use media creatively, often mixing them imaginatively as their work develops.
202. The very good leadership of a strong, experienced and well-informed teaching team ensures that standards are improving. Students are encouraged to visit galleries and museums and the well-forged link with a local independent school is used well to provide life-drawing classes through which observational and drawing skills can be significantly improved. The links with the local consortium of secondary schools are strengthening and the department is looking to mutual gains from those links.
203. Accommodation is satisfactory for the number of students at present and they value their own studio space.

### Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at AS and A-level are **well above the average for the school** and achievement is excellent.
- The expertise of staff is leading to the high attainment.
- Recruitment to A-level is small and has not attracted boys.

### Commentary

204. At both AS and A-level, results are above the national average. The numbers taking drama are very small and the subject has not recruited any boys. The National Diploma Btec Drama course has successfully recruited larger numbers of both boys and girls and standards are good with all completing the 18 units and achieving a pass and above. Standards of performance are very good. Standards of writing are slightly less secure but are nevertheless

good. As some pupils have below average standards of literacy skill, this is very good achievement.

205. Achievement overall is excellent. Students performed considerably better in this subject than other A and AS subjects and exceeded their predictions. Performance skills in both the A-level and Btec courses show evidence of significant achievement, especially in their skills of characterisation and sustainability of character through performance. Standards in writing are good and for some pupils they are very good. Students' files are very well presented and the standard of directorial analysis in essays on Lorca's 'Blood Wedding', for example, is very high and shows a depth of understanding of a wide range of stylistic features of production.
206. Teaching and learning are very good and sometimes excellent but the subject was only sampled. The teaching seen had real passion and teachers are very highly skilled. The very high expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning in the subject as well structured schemes of work are leading to the excellent achievement of pupils. Lessons are clearly focused on improvement and pupils are constantly reminded of the criteria by which performance will be judged.

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

**Example of outstanding practice - A strong feature of the excellent teaching seen in drama was the way in which the teacher modelled the skills needed to achieve a grade A in the final examination.**

In a Year 12, lesson the students made significant gains in their depth of understanding about the development of characterisation. Through a range of skilfully devised improvisations, the pupils built their understanding of their characters. Using the abilities of the most able student, the teacher modelled an example of sustaining the character in a given situation and linked the features of the demonstration to the assessment criteria for achieving an A grade in the examination. As a result, the quality of the acting in character from the less confident students improved considerably and they were able to emulate some of the key elements of effective characterisation, especially through their increased awareness of the use of gesture and mannerism, to underline particular moods and emotions.

207. The leadership and management are both excellent. The head of department is an AST and the department sits within a Performing Arts faculty. There is outstanding vision for the subject which is exemplified in the departmental handbook which is a model of excellence. The drama team work very closely and effectively and the leadership has an explicit focus on the highest possible achievement for all students. A four-year development plan clearly outlines the future and the priorities for development are entirely appropriate. Standards of performance are clearly very high and written coursework is a greater challenge, especially for pupils with only satisfactory and sometimes weak literacy skills. Whilst the Btec is flourishing in terms of numbers, the AS and A-level numbers are relatively low and boys are not being attracted to take the subject. The department makes a significant contribution to the school's provision for social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC). The range of extra-curricular provision is outstanding and students are regularly involved in additional rehearsal for coursework performances and have opportunities for theatre visits and links with other schools. As well as providing excellent leadership to the drama department, the advanced skills teacher makes a significant contribution to the coaching programme within school.
208. There was little reference to post-16 drama provision in the last report but it was recognised as being effective. It is now an area with some outstanding features. Therefore, progress since the last inspection is very good.

### **Media studies**

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



## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results at AS and A-level are **well above the average for the school** and achievement is very good.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge is leading to the high attainment and very good achievement.
- The subject is very popular and recruitment is high compared with other AS and A2 subjects.

## **Commentary**

209. At both AS and A-level, results are well above the average for pupils at the school. Over half the pupils achieved the highest grades at AS and just under half of the group reached the highest levels at A-level.
210. The achievement of pupils is very good and sometimes excellent. Students are recruited at a wide range of entry levels, including some with low levels of literacy, and all make very good progress. The school's predictions for attainment were exceeded by one and often two levels and this is very good achievement. A student with dyslexia is achieving very well with the excellent support and additional resources provided by the teacher. Students are provided with a detailed course handbook devised by the department with very high expectations of their attitude, attendance and commitment to the course and this contributes significantly to the very high achievement.
211. Teaching and learning are good but the subject was only sampled. The teaching seen had real passion and the excitement and commitment for the subject was transmitted to the students, who consequently worked well and were keen to engage with the activity. The approaches to learning are very varied and designed to suit all styles. There is much practical work and high standards are achieved with the minimum of resources and effective links with a local school. Students' files are very well presented and the work is accurately assessed by teachers. Students are very clear about what they do well and what they need to do to improve. Teachers' notes are extremely useful and are supplemented with an extensive range of supporting material and the opportunity for wider reading and independent research. Students have excellent attitudes to the subject and are highly motivated and this is a direct result of the high aspirations of the teachers and their commitment to providing an exciting range of learning opportunities.
212. The leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a huge enthusiasm for the subject that is compelling and is clearly leading to very high recruitment compared with other sixth form subjects. Departmental analysis is detailed and rigorous with modular analysis compared with the performance of students nationally. Very good use is made of this to inform teaching. The department has a very good action plan for growth and development and is ambitious for the future. Accommodation is just satisfactory and resources are just sufficient for the current provision. There is a wide range of extra-curricular provision, including a filming and editing course at a school of excellence. The subject was not taught at the time of the last inspection.

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

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good.
- There is very good leadership and management.

- There are very good assessment systems.
- There are excellent extra-curricular activities.
- Changing accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

213. Standards were satisfactory. In a Year 12 recreational volleyball lesson, the students performed most of the skills to a satisfactory standard. In an A-level lesson, standards were good. The students considered the effects of stress on the body, and were able to relate these to a number of sporting incidents. The A/S and A2 level results for 2004 were both below national averages; the number of candidates was small.
214. Whilst PE is available for all students in Year 12, at the present time, no programme exists for Year 13 students; however, this is something that the head of the department is planning to change for the future.
215. Achievement overall is good, and the department is able to monitor achievement through the very effective use of ICT with data on all students, allowing them to track individual students across all PE activities. Overall standards of teaching are good, and sometimes very good and excellent. Learning overall is good; participation rates are very high.
216. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for what he wants to achieve at the school. The department, community coaches and the students themselves provide an excellent range of extra-curricular activities open to students of all abilities. Overall, the quality of departmental documentation is very good. The handbook, in particular, is a very useful document which ensures effective management of the subject.
217. Overall, the PE accommodation and facilities are satisfactory. The gym changing rooms, however, including the showers, are currently unsatisfactory. The pavilion is in a very poor state of repair, with both changing areas, toilets and shower areas needing a total refurbishment.
218. The department is correctly focused on raising standards in examination performance and has set targets to achieve this in the 2005 examinations, and will continue to provide high quality PE and sporting opportunities for students of all abilities.
219. The opportunities provided for students in the sixth form have improved since the last inspection and are now very good. Standards are satisfactory and progress since the last inspection is sound.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Business studies**

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

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

- Teaching is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- There is very good use of data to inform learning.
- There are insufficient business and industry links.

### **Commentary**

220. Standards overall are good. In a Year 13 lesson, the students were able to discuss in detail and answer questions on the links between the theories of motivation and the human resource function to a good standard. In Year 12, the group had a detailed discussion through a team meeting with the teacher about the development of their business enterprise; this was done to a good standard.
221. In the 2004 examination, both in the single and the double award, the results were marginally below those obtained nationally, but the gap is closing. The department has done a detailed analysis of the results and will concentrate on strategies to improve performance by students in the tested units.
222. Achievement is good. In all lessons observed, work was stretching the students to think; this supported achievement and all the students made gains in their learning. The use of data by the department is a strength and this is confirmed by the awarding body, who commented on the quality of their assessment procedures.
223. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers show a very good command of the areas of learning and specialist subject knowledge. They plan effectively with clear lesson objectives and use appropriate teaching strategies to bring the best out of the students. A crucial feature in the quality of teaching is the very good targeted high level questioning. A major strength of the teaching is the quality of relationships between the staff and the students, who clearly enjoy being taught by the business studies staff.
224. Leadership and management are very good. Leadership is dedicated to ensuring the highest possible standards and achievement in business studies. It is reflective and critical in its departmental analysis of performance and articulates a clear vision for the future.
225. Since the last inspection, the department has developed more links with business, industry and the wider community; however, it recognises that it needs to work at increasing these links in the future as the demand for more vocational input increases. This is a very time consuming activity and more support in this area is required. The department could develop more partnership work with local organisations to produce and share resources and materials to support the learning.
226. The business studies learning resource is a pleasant environment, with good facilities for ICT and e-learning, with relevant displays on the walls. The atmosphere in all lessons is business like with a very positive tone set for learning by the staff. Resources in the subject area are good. Business studies is establishing itself as a strength of the sixth form curriculum.

## 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>4</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	5
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>5</b>
Pupils' achievement	3	5
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>		<b>4</b>
Attendance	4	5
Attitudes	2	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	3	5
How well pupils learn	3	5
The quality of assessment	4	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2

Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the headteacher		4
The leadership of other key staff	4	4
The effectiveness of management	4	4

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