

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SKIPTON GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL**

Skipton

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121712

Headteacher: Mrs J Renou

Lead inspector: Dr Andy Swallow

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2005

Inspection number: 268913

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (selective)  
School category: Voluntary controlled  
Age range of pupils: 11 - 18  
Gender of pupils: Female  
Number on roll: 708

School address: Gargrave Road

Skipton  
North Yorkshire  
Postcode: BD23 1QL

Telephone number: 01756 707600

Fax number: 01756 701068

Appropriate authority: The Governing body

Name of chair of Mr John Goodfellow  
governors:

Date of previous 19<sup>th</sup> April 1999  
inspection:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Skipton Girls' High School is a selective girls' grammar school situated on an attractive but restrictive site to the west of the market town of Skipton in North Yorkshire. The school serves an area that is predominantly rural in character, although an increasing, albeit small, proportion of girls come from urbanised areas. The school has 708 girls on roll, including 207 in the sixth form. The number of students has risen by over 10 per cent since the last inspection and has risen significantly over the last three years.

The overwhelming majority of students are white British, with just around eight per cent from ethnic minority backgrounds. A very small proportion of students are entitled to free school meals. Students' prior attainment on entry is well above average. There are very few students whose first language is not English and all are very competent speakers and writers of English. Only eight students have special educational needs, one of whom has a statement, which is significantly below the national average.

The overall socio-economic background of students is well above average. A significantly higher than average proportion continue with full-time education at the ages of 16 and 18. Skipton Girls' High School has specialist status for engineering and a mission statement focused on learning and achievement of the highest quality, challenging gender stereotypes and preparing young, able women for the innovative and pioneering 21<sup>st</sup> century world of work.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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12682	Jim Griffin	Lay inspector	
4551	Lyn Banks	Team inspector	Citizenship
13155	John Dixon	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Sixth form French
32930	Jacqueline Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education
20611	Paul Evans	Team inspector	English Drama Sixth form English
31981	Eric Forster	Team inspector	Art and design Sixth form art and design
12600	Lyn Hesketh	Team inspector	Design and technology Sixth form design and technology
27585	Ken Hounslow	Team inspector	Science Sixth form physics
27416	Tom Howard	Team inspector	Mathematics Sixth form mathematics
30187	Susan Johnson	Team inspector	History
15280	Derek Kennard	Team inspector	Geography Sixth form geography
28429	Christopher Maynard	Team inspector	Music Sixth form music
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education Business studies Sixth form business education
15970	Neil Waller	Team inspector	Information and communication technology

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Skipton Girls' High School is a very good school that provides a **very good quality education** for all its students and very good value for money. The main reasons for students achieving so highly and making such significant progress are the very good quality of teaching, the fully motivated students, the strong ethos and the unequivocally determined leadership shown by the headteacher and governors. Although selective, the school includes very well all students in all of its work.

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

- National Curriculum test and GCSE examination results are very high.
- Teaching and learning are very good, which leads to students achieving very well.
- The leadership of the headteacher and governors is very effective and gives a clear direction for the work of the school. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders and directors of study is not as comprehensive as it might be.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning and relationships are excellent.
- Provision for enhancing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Provision for students in English, mathematics, science, business studies, drama, music and art and design is very good.
- The use of assessment for improving students' learning in Years 7 – 9 is not as effective as in Years 10 –11.
- Provision in religious education is unsatisfactory, and arrangements for all students to take part in a daily act of collective worship do not meet statutory requirements.

Improvements since the last inspection have been good, especially in teaching and learning, in the collation of students' performance information across all years, and in the attainment of sixth form students. The school's recently acquired engineering specialist status is making a good contribution to overall curriculum development. The full range of information and communication technology (ICT) is now taught in Years 7 – 11 and assessments are contained in reports to parents. The use of National Curriculum criteria to assess students' progress in Years 7 – 9 is still inconsistent and provision for religious education in Years 7 – 11 and in the sixth form is currently unsatisfactory. Arrangements for a daily act of collective worship for all students, when they do not meet in the hall, are not always upheld.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Students' achievement is very good overall.** Students' prior attainment on entry is well above average. By the end of Year 9, in 2004, students' attainment in the national tests was very high in English, mathematics and science. In 2004, GCSE results for students attaining 5+ A\*-C grades were very high compared with those seen nationally and results, for those

attaining 5+ A\*-G grades were well above the national average. Such results represent very good achievement by students. They were well above the national average in all subjects. These high National Curriculum and GCSE standards have been sustained over many years. Standards of work seen in the inspection were well above average in each year group, despite the often very cramped classroom conditions.

**Students' personal qualities are very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.** Their attitudes are very good. Relationships are excellent. Behaviour is excellent. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of students' education is very good.** The quality of teaching is **very good**. Over four out of five lessons seen were good or better, with over half very good or excellent. Students learn and achieve very well because of the very good teaching. The curriculum is good and is supplemented by a good extra-curricular enrichment programme. Guidance and support are good. Links with parents are good and are very good with the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The headteacher leads the school very effectively.** She has very high academic aspirations and a very clear sense of purpose and vision for continuous improvement. Key staff provide good leadership and management across the school. Governors share the headteacher's ambitions for success and challenge individuals to achieve higher outcomes, providing appropriate levels of support. Governance is very good overall, despite the shortcoming of not complying fully with the legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students and of not making satisfactory provision for religious education in Years 7 – 11 and in the sixth form. Overall, leadership and management are good. Leadership is very good in English, mathematics, physical education, business studies, art and design, drama and music, but unsatisfactory in religious education.

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

Parents and students speak highly of the school. Parents are very appreciative of the education provided and are highly supportive of the school's work. A significant minority feel that they do not receive enough information on their daughters' progress, and that the school does not seek sufficiently their views. Inspectors support these concerns. Students say that they are taught well and are expected to work hard. Inspectors agree. A significant proportion of students feel that misbehaviour and bullying are problematic, that staff do not treat all students fairly and are not interested in their views. Inspectors do not support these concerns.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- ensure the consistent and precise use of National Curriculum levels and criteria for assessment to support students' more even patterns of achievement across Years 7 – 9, thereby further improving both teaching and learning to the very good standards seen in Years 10 – 11 and in the sixth form;



- develop further strategies for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning across the school by senior leaders and directors of study, in order to improve the quality of very good and excellent practice in Years 7 – 9, and the proportion of excellent lessons throughout the school;
- improve provision for religious education in Years 7 – 11;

**and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- provide a daily act of collective worship for all students, particularly when they do not meet in the hall.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT SKIPTON GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

This is an average size sixth form serving Skipton and outlying areas. Students are offered a wide range of AS and A2 subjects, including shared provision in seven subjects with the local boys' grammar school.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Sixth form provision is very good.** Students achieve very well, leading to very high overall results. The retention rate within sixth form courses is very high. Nearly all A2 students proceed to higher education. Students play a very positive part throughout the school and have excellent attitudes to learning. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The sixth form is highly cost effective and includes very well all students in all of its work.

#### The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Examination results are very high; students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Standards of work seen are well above average.
- Provision in art and design is excellent and is very good in most subjects.
- Students show excellent attitudes to work, behave exceptionally well and make a major contribution to school life.
- Students confirm that they are well supported, with very good academic advice and guidance a particularly strong feature.
- The sixth form does not meet the statutory requirement to provide access to religious education for all students.

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

Judgements about the provision in 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. The focus subjects were English, modern foreign languages, mathematics, geography, physics, product design, art and design, music, theatre studies and business studies.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Provision in both English language and English literature is very good.</b> Standards seen are well above average. Teaching, learning and achievement are very good. <b>Provision for modern foreign languages is good.</b> Standards seen are above average. Teaching, learning and achievement are good.
Mathematics	<b>Provision in mathematics is very good.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching, learning and achievement are very good.
Science	<b>Provision in physics is very good.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching, learning and achievement are very good.
Humanities	<b>Provision in geography is very good.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching, learning and achievement are very good.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Provision in product design is very good.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good. Achievement is good.
Visual and performing arts	<b>Provision in music is very good.</b> Standards are very high. Teaching,

and media	learning and achievement are excellent. <b>Provision in art and design is excellent.</b> Standards seen are very high. Teaching and learning are excellent. <b>Provision in theatre studies is very good.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching, learning and achievement are very good.
Business and other vocational courses	<b>Provision in business studies is very good.</b> Standards are above average. Teaching, learning and achievement are very good.

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

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Advice, guidance and support in the sixth form are good. Students appreciate the frequent and good information that they receive about their progress. The guidance on future courses and careers is good. Inspectors do not agree with students' concerns over the quality of the sixth form curriculum, and the range of enrichment activities.

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

**Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.** Subject leadership and management are very good. Staff know their students well and are able to assess their progress effectively. Students have adequate research and study facilities.

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

Inspectors agree with the positive views that students have about overall provision in the sixth form. They appreciate the way staff treat them as young adults and the way their views are heard and taken on board. They talk positively about the commitment and enthusiasm of their teachers and the very good social atmosphere among students. Students value the ready access to reliable computers. They recommend the sixth form to others.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

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

In 2004, the National Curriculum test results in English, mathematics and science were significantly above the national average. These very high outcomes have been sustained over many years. The teachers' assessments were well above the national average in all subjects. Citizenship was not formally assessed. The GCSE results, for students attaining five or more grades A\*-C, were very high compared with those seen nationally, and results for those attaining five or more grades A\*-G were well above the national average. These results show very good overall achievement by students. Standards, seen during the inspection in Years 7 – 9, were well above national expectations in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages, art and design, physical education, music and drama. They were above national expectations in geography, history, information and communication technology, physical education and citizenship, but below in religious education. Standards, seen in Years 10 and 11, were well above national expectations in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, business studies, art and design, music and drama. They were above national expectations in geography, information and communication technology, and citizenship, but well below in religious education. Overall, standards of work seen were well above national expectations, showing students' achievement to be very good and their targets met.

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

- National Curriculum test outcomes, GCSE, GCE AS and A2 results were very high compared with national averages in 2004.
- Standards of work seen during the inspection were consistently well above average.
- Students achieve very well over time throughout the school.
- Students' language and literacy skills, and their competence in mathematics, are very well developed.
- The very few students with additional needs make very good progress throughout the school.
- Although students achieve very well by the end of Year 9, given their starting points in Year 7, they do not achieve as highly as they might, in all subjects, in each of Years 7, 8 and 9.

#### **Commentary**

1. By the end of Year 9, the students' results in the 2004 National Curriculum tests were very high compared with national averages and the outcomes of similar schools in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. All targets were achieved. Attainment at the higher levels was particularly very high in all three subjects. This pattern of significantly high performance has been sustained over many years, with exceptionally high outcomes in mathematics at the very highest levels over the past two years. The teacher assessments were well above the national average in all subjects. Current standards seen during the inspection are similar. Citizenship is taught across the curriculum in Years 7 – 11. Formal strategies for assessing students' work are not yet in place, although students do assess their own progress at

the end of Year 9. In 2004, all Year 9 students were entered for the GCSE short course in ICT, with a very high proportion attaining A\*-C grades.

2. By the end of Year 11 in 2004, students' GCSE results were very high compared with the national average for those attaining five or more GCSE grades A\*-C, and were well above the national average for those attaining five or more grades A\*-G. GCSE results were well above the national average in all subjects. The school does not offer external examinations in citizenship and ICT. The trend in very high GCSE performance has been sustained over many years. In 2004, GCSE outcomes were slightly lower than in previous years and overall average in comparison with similar schools. This is due to the tragic circumstances of two students whose outcomes affected the final results of a small Year 11 cohort.
3. During the inspection, the standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 were well above national expectations in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, art and design, physical education, music and drama. They were above average in geography, information and communication technology, physical education and citizenship, but below average in religious education.
4. Standards seen in Years 10 – 11 were well above the national average in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, business studies, art and design, music and drama. They were above national expectations in geography, information and communication technology, citizenship, and work-related learning, but well below in religious education.
5. Literacy skills are very good across all years. In Years 7 – 9, students are very good at expressing themselves well and confidently. They are particularly very good at presenting and communicating information orally, undertaking independent research in the library and using computers, writing well-argued assignments that make complex ideas clear and engaging. Students, in Years 10 – 11, show well above average literacy skills and consequently do very well in all of their GCSE subjects. Subject-specific vocabulary is very well understood and used appropriately by students.
6. Students show very good mathematical skills. Most subjects provide very good opportunities for handling mathematical information. In particular, science, geography and business studies make very good use of students' mathematical skills. Students are particularly very good at making calculations, analysing data and using graphical skills to investigate patterns and trends.
7. Students' skills in using ICT are good. All students apply their ICT skills confidently and there are particularly good examples of composing in music, manipulating digital images in art and design, function plotting in mathematics, data logging in science and computer aided design and manufacture in design and technology.
8. There are very few students with special educational needs and with English as an additional language, but their achievement, overall, is very good and they make very good progress by the end of Year 11. At the end of Year 9, students with special needs exceed the gains expected nationally in all subjects. In lessons seen in Years 7 – 9, achievement was very good in all subjects.

9. In 2004, students with special educational needs gained GCSE passes for all subjects for which they were entered, as a result of carefully targeted support. All gained at least their predicted scores. In lessons seen in Years 10 – 11, achievement was very good in all subjects. The progress made by students from minority ethnic heritages and for those whom English is not the first language, is at least as good as their peers, and often better. Gifted and talented students achieve well throughout Years 7 – 9 and very well in GCSE and A level examinations.
  
10. Overall, students achieve very well across Years 7 – 11 and make very good progress, taking into account their well above average starting points in Year 7. Although students' achievement is very good by the end of Year 9, as evidenced in National Curriculum tests, teachers' assessments and in their work, achievement seen in lessons during the inspection was largely good. This is due to a smaller proportion of very good and excellent teaching and learning in Years 7 – 9 than seen in the rest of the school. Teachers' regular use of performance information to ensure that all students make even progress throughout Years 7 – 9 is not as well developed as in the rest of the school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	41.7 (43.4)	33.5 (33.4)
mathematics	46.0 (47.5)	35.7 (35.4)
science	42.8 (43.6)	33.2 (33.6)

*There were 89 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	98 (100)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98 (100)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	54 (55.6)	34.9 (34.7)

*There were 100 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

**Sixth form**

- In the ten subjects inspected in detail, examination results in 2004 were very high in the AS level in art and design, product design, geography, theatre studies and German, and well above the national average in business studies, English, French, music and physics. AS level outcomes in mathematics are not certified until Year 13. In the 2004 GCE A2 examinations, results in art and design, business studies, product design, English, geography, mathematics, music, physics and theatre studies were well above the national average. German results were in line with the national average, but French results were below. Overall, sixth form results have significantly improved since the last inspection. They are now very high compared with national averages for students gaining the higher grades and for those gaining pass grades. In terms of value-added, this represents an improvement since the last inspection.
- Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above the national average. They were very high in music and art and design, well above average in English, mathematics, physics, and design and technology, above average in geography and modern foreign languages and average in business studies. Overall, achievement in the sixth form is very good.

**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	98.2 (98.1)	92.4 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	60.1 (58.9)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	92.9 (92.0)	75.0 (74.6)

*There were 93 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

Students' behaviour is exceptionally good, underpinned by excellent relationships. They show very good attitudes towards school and their work and their personal development is very good. Attendance and punctuality levels are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' excellent behaviour is underpinned by excellent relationships, in all year groups.
- Students' attitudes towards school and their work are very good.
- Students' personal qualities are very well developed, including excellent moral and social development.
- Students' attendance and punctuality are very good.
- Sixth form students make an impressive contribution to the life of the school.

### **Commentary**

13. Most students are proud of their school. They are very positive about their teachers, whom they hold in very high regard. They are particularly positive about the encouragement and support that teachers provide. In lessons, students' attitudes are very good. In most lessons, they listen attentively and show very good levels of interest and concentration. They respond particularly well when expectations are high, tasks are demanding and there is a mixture of practical and theoretical activities, whole-class and independent learning situations.
14. Behaviour at all times is excellent. A strikingly calm, social atmosphere prevails in the dining hall and throughout the cramped site during lunchtime and break times. As a result, staff can trust students to socialise largely unsupervised during break time, for example. There is no evidence of bullying or anti-social behaviour. Parents' questionnaire responses support this very positive picture. Students confirm there are neither racist nor bullying incidents. Where minor incidents occur, they are dealt with very effectively by staff. There were no exclusions in the year previous to the inspection.
15. There are exceptionally harmonious relationships among students, and between students and adults in the school. Most teachers value students' work and effectively praise effort and good work. As a result, in lessons, students are comfortable expressing views and asking questions of their teachers. In most subjects, lessons make positive contributions to students' exceptionally good moral and social development. Almost all students in all year groups are noticeably calm, mature and well mannered. When questioned in groups, students listen calmly and with respect to different views expressed by others. As a result, teachers are able to rely on most students to work sensibly in pairs and small groups. Nearly all students have an exceptionally well-developed sense of right and wrong and of what is fair. They justifiably talk of the confidence they get from teachers, who treat them as equals. Older pupils exercise responsibility for themselves and others in a sensible way.
16. The 'gatherings', geography, modern foreign languages, music, art and drama lessons make important contributions to students' good multi-cultural development. For example, when fair trade was the theme for gatherings, an Ethiopian coffee farmer visited and spoke about the impact of free trade on Third World coffee producers. Students' good understanding of their own culture is aided significantly by visits to local museums and theatres. Their spiritual development is good overall. There are good opportunities for reflection in the gatherings. Design and technology, music and drama lessons provide students with good opportunities to be creative and get a sense of self-worth. The practical parts of many science lessons help create a sense of puzzlement



and surprise. Nevertheless, the contribution of religious education lessons to students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.

## Sixth form

17. Most sixth formers are proud of their school. The subject enthusiasm shown by most teachers raises students' interest and encourages them to do as well as they can. Most students consider that they are treated like young adults. Good computer facilities and the friendships with other students also contribute significantly to students' very positive attitudes towards school and their studies. In nearly all lessons, students listen very well and show very good levels of concentration and determination to complete set tasks. Students' behaviour is excellent. Relationships between staff and students and among students are excellent. Students' personal development is very good. When questioned as individuals and groups, their responses are strikingly articulate, thoughtful and clear. Independent learning and responsibility are very effectively encouraged and taken on board by students. This benefits not only the sixth formers, but the rest of the school and the local community through voluntary work. For example, over 30 Year 12 and 13 students, known as Learning Mentors, directly help main school students individually and in forms with a range of academic subjects. A larger number are on a volunteer list to help teachers on request. Sixth formers organise a number of clubs for the rest of the school, in art, dance and drama. The sixth form charities committee runs a wide range of fundraising activities, and sixth formers undertake a large amount of voluntary work in the local community.

## Attendance

18. Attendance in Years 7 to 11 is well above average. Unauthorised absence is consistently well below average. The school's measures to combat absence are good. Most parents take their responsibilities seriously, in the event of their daughter's absence, by routinely informing the school. This is reflected in the very low level of unauthorised absence. Students' punctuality is very good. Most students routinely arrive on time and get promptly to their lessons, throughout the day.

## Sixth form

19. The attendance of sixth form students is very good and their punctuality is good. The attendance and punctuality of individual students are very effectively measured for each of their subjects. The practice of expecting students to arrive at school for registration at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions is very effective. Around one third of Year 12 students receive Educational Maintenance Allowances. These allowances have a positive impact on students' attendance, since in order to qualify they must avoid all forms of unauthorised absence as well as meet deadlines in relation to homework and coursework.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.6	School data	0.1
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.*

## Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of students on roll	Number of fixed-period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	642	0	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	8	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other background	0	0	0
Chinese	6	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
Parent / student preferred not to say	5	0	0
Information not obtained	13	0	0

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. The overwhelming majority of lessons seen were good or better, and just over half were very good or excellent. As a result of the very good teaching, all students, including the small proportion with special educational needs and English as an additional language, achieve very well. Students are assessed well overall and very well in the sixth form. Assessment in Years 7 – 9 is not as well used as in Years 10 – 11 and in the sixth form. As a result, not all students in Years 7 – 9 know what they need to do next in order to improve their work further in all subjects.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Almost every lesson seen was at least satisfactory, with over four out of five lessons good and over half of lessons very good. The result is that students learn consistently very well. The unsatisfactory teaching and learning are predominantly in religious education where there are temporary staff.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 – 11 and in the sixth form.
- Teaching and learning are very good in English, art and design and music throughout the school, and are excellent in art and design and music in the sixth form.
- Teaching and learning for the few students with special educational needs are very good in most subjects across the school.

- Assessment is used well in Years 10 – 11 and very well in the sixth form to respond to students' needs.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 – 9, but there are fewer very good or excellent lessons than elsewhere in the school. Assessment is not used as effectively, overall, as in other years.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in religious education.

## Commentary

20. Teaching and learning have improved significantly since the last inspection when only half of lessons were good or better and less than one in three, very good or excellent. Now, over four in five lessons are good, with over half very good or excellent. At the last inspection, the quality of teaching in the sixth form was judged to have fallen. It is now very strong, with almost all lessons good or better and two out of three, very good or excellent. The teaching of ICT in Years 10 – 11 has improved significantly, and there is now sufficient provision across subjects to meet legal requirements. Finally, at the last inspection, students' work was marked well overall. This is still the case, but there are now many more examples of good marking in all years. The use of assessment criteria to help students to understand what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve further their work, has also improved. It is now well developed in Years 10 – 11 and very well developed in the sixth form. Performance information in Years 7 – 9 is not used with the same precision and regularity in many subjects, although there are very good examples in science, music, drama and art and design.
21. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a very high command of subject knowledge and expertise, and invariably plan their lessons very well. They engage their students through well thought-out techniques, often involving the use of interactive whiteboard technology, video, role-play and skilful questioning, and this leads to students responding very well. Students are very keen to learn and have very good attitudes to their work. Teachers have very high expectations, particularly in Years 10 – 11 and in the sixth form, and this leads to students' well above average standards of work in lessons and high outcomes in GCSE and GCE examinations. Teachers' expectations are not always as consistently high in all subjects in Years 7 – 9. Whilst this neither affects the well above standards of work in lessons, nor the very high outcomes by the end of Year 9, it does mean that students' achievement and progress across Years 7 – 9 is not as even as it might be. Teachers use the 75-minute periods very effectively, often in cramped conditions, and use homework assignments well to reinforce and extend classroom learning. The use of teaching assistants, particularly to support students with additional needs, is very effective.
22. Teachers provide many opportunities for students to work independently and to use computers and the library for research purposes. Most students respond positively to these opportunities, showing a willingness to take responsibility and to be enterprising. Of particular merit are their outstanding contributions to the weekly 'gatherings'.
23. In Years 7 – 9 teaching is very good in English, science, modern foreign languages, drama, physical education, art and design and music. It is good in mathematics, design and technology, history, geography, ICT and citizenship. As a result, the students' learning is consistently good or better in these subjects. Teaching is unsatisfactory in religious education, where there is insufficient expertise overall to deliver the recently introduced Agreed Syllabus.

24. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in all subjects, with the exception of geography and citizenship where it is good, and religious education where it is again unsatisfactory. The predominantly very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 makes a significant contribution to the very high GCSE results. The overall quality of learning is very good.
25. Teaching and learning for the few students with special educational needs are very good in most subjects across the school. This is because teachers know the needs of students and in-class support by teaching assistants is very effective, where it is available. The two advanced classroom assistants work very well together to provide a statemented student with high quality classroom resources, translated speedily into Braille. They understand their role very well in supporting the educational progress of this student. Other students, on the special educational needs register, are very well supported by school-based staff and those from external services, enabling them to access fully the curriculum and engage in extra-curricular activities. Subject and pastoral staff are consulted and involved appropriately in the annual review of students' statements and regular reviews of individual educational plans and pupil support plans. The school has identified a small group of potentially low attaining students in Year 11 and individual teaching and learning plans are being developed for them in appropriate subjects. Students with English as an additional language, as well as gifted and talented students, are equally very well taught in Years 10 – 11, and well taught, as with other students, in Years 7 – 9. The school has a register of gifted students in Years 9, 10 and 11, but not all teachers are familiar with this list.
26. Teachers assess students' progress in Years 10 – 11 very thoroughly and constructively in most subjects. As a result, most students have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve further their work. Assessment is less well used to respond to individual students' needs in physical education and religious education. In Years 7 – 9, fewer subjects use assessment information and National Curriculum levels as carefully in planning to meet students' needs, although there are very good examples in science, music and drama.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 136 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
8 (6%)	62 (45%)	45 (34%)	17 (12%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

**Sixth form**

27. Teaching and learning are very good. The quality of teaching and learning was good or better in almost all lessons seen, and very good or excellent in two out of three lessons. In the sixth form subjects, which were the main focus for the inspection, teaching seen was generally very good, but excellent in music and art and design, and good in modern foreign languages.
28. Assessment procedures are very good. Students know the level of work at which they are working and they have clear information, through very effective marking and constructive feedback, on how to improve further. Targets are set very effectively, using the rich data available.

## **The curriculum**

The school's curriculum is good, with the exception of provision made for religious education. Opportunities for extra-curricular enrichment are good. Resources are satisfactory. Although often cramped, accommodation is satisfactory overall.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum is well organised and suited to all students' needs.
- The overall expertise of teachers is very good and very well matched to ensure effective curriculum delivery.
- The school's engineering specialism is making a good contribution to overall curriculum development, both in design and technology and more widely across the school.
- The extra-curricular enrichment programme is good.
- The school does not fully comply with the legal requirement to provide religious education in all years, and is not currently delivering the Agreed Syllabus.
- Arrangements for a daily act of collective worship are not consistently fulfilled.

## **Commentary**

29. Overall, the curriculum offered caters well for the needs of individual students with a good extra-curricular enrichment programme and good levels of student participation. The school now ensures that the amount of time available for delivering the curriculum meets with national recommendations, and that the full range of information and communication technology is taught sufficiently in Years 7 – 11. However, provision for religious education in Years 7 – 11, and in the sixth form, does not meet statutory requirements. Plans are not yet in place to ensure an effective delivery of the recently updated Agreed Syllabus. The school has still not succeeded in making provision for an act of collective worship for all students on those days that they do not gather in the hall. Current tutor group arrangements for a 'thought for the week' are not consistently carried out.
30. Personal, social and health education (PSHE), including drug education and sex and relationship education, is taught well by the specialist PSHE teacher. Effective support is also provided by specialist outside agencies who contribute to the drug education programme in Year 9, to the sex and relationship education programme in Years 7 and 10, and to the off-timetable health day in Year 10.
31. Students, in Years 10 and 11, have an appropriate choice of GCSE subjects. These courses suit the students' academic intentions, including opportunities to study three separate sciences and statistics. The school's engineering specialism is well reflected in the breadth of technological programmes on offer, in the innovative projects with Edinburgh University, Rolls Royce and locally based companies, and in the planning of many other subjects, most notably science, mathematics and modern foreign languages. The curriculum is further broadened with business studies and drama. Access is open to all. Students also receive opportunities to attend additional classes aimed at maximising their GCSE performance. Careers education is provided effectively through off-timetable days in Years 7 and 8, and a specific programme in Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, comprehensive briefing sessions are organised prior to a

two-week work experience in Year 11, followed by effective de-briefing sessions. Provision for work-related learning is good and the school offers some well planned additional work-related learning enrichment experiences. Inspectors do not support the concerns expressed by some parents about the potential limitations of the curriculum in Years 10 – 11.

32. The small number of students with special educational needs and English as an additional language has full access to the curriculum. These students are very well integrated into the life of the school and are always taught alongside their peers. A statemented student has very good access to the curriculum, through targeted classroom support and the availability of specialist resources, including Braille texts.
33. There is a good range of extra-curricular enrichment activities of interest and relevance to students. Many students of all ages attend these activities, which include a wide range of subject clubs and societies at lunch times and after school, school-based concerts, visits to local industries, art galleries, theatres and concerts, French and German educational visits, visits to Prague and Auschwitz, Young Enterprise and Duke of Edinburgh schemes, and partnerships with Leeds Metropolitan and Edinburgh universities. In addition, there is a good programme of extra-curricular sport. Students organise many of these clubs themselves, as well as taking responsibility for the Charities Committee, a Fair Trade shop and the school's own branch of a major high street bank. Inspectors do not share the concerns expressed by some parents about the range and availability of additional experiences for students.
34. In the last report, accommodation was judged to be of a high quality but with severe restrictions in space in many areas. This is still the case. However, since the last inspection, the school has done a great deal to refurbish learning environments and has grouped subjects, wherever possible, to ensure more efficient deployment of resources. Many classrooms and corridors are offset by good quality displays of students' work. Nevertheless, owing to the overcrowded nature of the school's site, many rooms are small and pose particular challenges for different approaches to learning, and particularly so given the increasing numbers of students. Teachers work very hard to ensure that such disadvantages do not hinder students' progress and overall standards of achievement. In physical education, however, the limited specialist on-site accommodation and facilities do restrict the range of team games played, and the lengthy, yet very well managed, weekly journeys to a local sports centre do reduce overall curriculum time to below the Government's recommendations and aspirations for all children. Disabled access has been given attention by the school, within the limitations of the present buildings. It is publicised to new applicants. Most subjects are resourced adequately to deliver the curriculum. There is a very good match to subject requirements. Although a number of teachers have left the school recently to retire or to seek promotion, this is not having a detrimental impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

### **Sixth form**

35. The sixth form curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced. The joint curriculum arrangements with the local boys' grammar school ensure that students have a choice from a wide variety of AS and A2 academic subjects. Teachers are well matched to the needs of the curriculum. Students' concerns about the overall range and suitability of courses on offer, including the programme of enrichment activities, are not supported by inspectors.

## Care, guidance and support

The school cares well for its students. It gives them good support, advice and guidance. There are satisfactory measures to involve students in the school's work and development, through seeking and acting on their views. Sixth form students enjoy good support and guidance and there are effective arrangements to hear and act on their views.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school cares well for its students.
- Induction arrangements for Years 7 and 12 are effective.
- Students get good advice on careers and the next stage in their education.
- Students value the clear information on attainment levels in subjects, provided as part of the regular reviews of their work.
- Specific targets for improving students' work in individual subjects are often imprecise, particularly across Years 7 – 9.

## Commentary

36. The school's procedures for ensuring the safety and welfare of students are good. Levels of minor accidents are low. In lessons, teachers effectively emphasise the importance of safety considerations, especially prior to practical work in science and in design and technology. The formal policies and practices relating to equipment, the Internet and school trips are applied effectively. Students feel safe at all times in school. Child protection procedures in the school are effective and all new staff to the school are inducted well via training sessions in the autumn term. The whole staff team receive up-date training every two years. The school makes good use of the available outside expertise to deal effectively with the complex needs of a small minority of its students. In some cases, the student is appropriately referred to a range of external services, including the LEA's educational social worker and the local Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health Team. The school operates a health drop-in once a week, run by the school nurse. It is currently working with partner schools and health agencies to develop a full-time health service on the school site, available to students at the school and to those from other schools and colleges in the town and surrounding area. The additional needs, mostly physical, of the few students with SEN are carefully considered and effectively addressed. Students with SEN are consulted appropriately about their individual education plans at their annual reviews.
37. The induction of students, from up to 50 primary schools, is effective. All are visited in their schools. Additional support for those who are considered vulnerable, and specially designed work in English to bridge the move from Year 6 to Year 7, are important features. Parents are positive about how students settle at school.
38. There is a very strong and committed team of learning managers and personal tutors who have very good relationships with the students and who know them well. They check carefully the progress made by all students and intervene appropriately, with support, if required. Teachers generally assess students well in aspects of their work, behaviour and personal development, so that they have a full picture of students' strengths and weaknesses. There is a strong emphasis on working with parents and individual students when problems arise. The setting and reviewing of personal targets to help students with their academic progress is of an inconsistent quality throughout the school, and particularly in Years 7 – 9. Not all students, for example, in these years are aware of their National Curriculum progress, and what they need to do to achieve a higher level in their work.
39. The advice and guidance on future courses and career options are good, especially in Year 11. The work experience programme, presentations on the full range of post-16 options and



more detailed information on a range of college courses are important features of this work. The school employs its own part-time qualified careers officer to develop further careers education and guidance and to organise work experience in Year 11. She is well supported by personal advisers from the Connexions Service who can offer more specialised support to individual students.

40. The school library and ICT facilities are readily accessible, with staff available to supervise and guide students with research and homework. An innovative sixth form learning mentors support programme trains students in Years 12 and 13 to act as learning mentors for other students throughout the school. They visit tutor groups during morning tutor periods and offer highly valued support.
41. The student council is a very important vehicle to enable all students' views to be taken into account. The council is run by Year 10 and 11 students who work with younger students in Years 7 to 9 to ensure that their views are represented. The Head Girl and two Deputy Head Girls also attend the learning managers' meetings and meet regularly with headteacher. This enables the school to become aware of issues of importance to students. However, the council has not yet created effective mechanisms through which to share widely its deliberations and decisions. As a result, it is not well appreciated by all students. The school has undertaken a number of surveys of students' views recently, but only limited use has been made of outcomes to date. Students with special educational needs are consulted about their individual educational plans at their annual reviews.
42. Recent refurbishments throughout the school have up-graded the standard of health and safety around the site. High quality risk assessments are in place across the school. Those in science are of a very high quality. The annexes of the school are separated from the main buildings by a busy road. Although students in Years 7 – 11 are supervised when crossing, this road does prompt concerns about safety and security, even though the school takes every reasonable step to ensure students' welfare.

### **Sixth form**

43. There is a strong emphasis on providing good impartial advice and guidance to students prior to entering the sixth form. During Year 11, students are made clearly aware of the entry requirements and interviews with the Connexions adviser are available, on request. These interviews are helpful in clarifying the range of choices for students, including joining the Sixth Form, moving to a college or pursuing work-based learning opportunities. Sixth form induction is effective. As a result, the choices that students make are both considered and realistic. A consequence is that the drop-out rate during the sixth form is very low. There are frequent reviews of students' progress that are informative and well valued. Guidance on the next stage of education or career, after sixth form, is good. The range of outside speakers from universities and other organisations is a strong feature of this support programme. Outside specialists are also available to work with girls to support applications for Oxbridge or medical school.
44. Sixth formers make a significant contribution to the life of the school. Students' views are sought on a range of issues, such as the higher education day, careers guidance and food choice in the new dining facility. Girls are consulted in advance about school plays and other productions. Inspectors do not support the feelings of some students that the school is not keen to seek out and respond to their views.

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

There is a good partnership with parents. Links with the local community make a very good contribution to students' personal development. Links with other schools and colleges are very good, making a significant contribution to students' opportunities and experiences.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are supportive of the school and appreciate the education that it provides.
- There are very productive links with other schools and universities, businesses and the local community, which benefit and enrich the students' education.
- The 'Simply Click' initiative is an effective ICT communication system with significant potential to help parents to support their daughters' learning in the home.
- The school does not consult parents enough on important issues.

### **Commentary**

45. Most parents are positive about what the school provides and achieves. Inspectors are very much in agreement with their views. Parents are highly satisfied with the teaching and the progress students make both academically and in their personal development. They speak very positively about students' behaviour, the fair way that students are treated and the way that they are inducted into the life of the school. The school has consulted effectively with parents on a range of specific issues, such as specialist school status and the introduction of 'Simply Click', but has no systematic approach to gathering views, sharing outcomes, then indicating to what extent parents' opinions have influenced change within the school.
46. Overall, the quality and range of information given to parents are good. The prospectus and regular newsletters are of a very good quality. Student planners provide a helpful way of maintaining regular contact between school and home, and the recent introduction of the website-based communication system 'Simply Click' is both innovative and efficient in creating a two-way flow of information, and in helping parents to support their daughters' learning through on-line subject resources. As well as the traditional parents' evening, all parents receive interim and annual reports on students' progress. The quality of annual reports is broadly satisfactory, although not all teachers comment on the subject skills that students are developing and few suggest meaningful targets by which students can usefully improve their performances. Parents contribute significantly to this successful partnership. They send their children to school regularly, leading to the well above average attendance levels, and attend the parents' meetings. Through the parent teacher association, parents organise successful fundraising and social events. These events also contribute to a very good sense of community that prevails.
47. The school is a vital resource for the local community. It plays host to a range of evening classes, community clubs and groups. Local businesses support the school's specialist engineering programmes to good effect and a number of local business representatives serve on the governing body. There are good opportunities for gifted and talented students to link with local companies to enhance their skills and qualities; for example, through the design and production of a carbon fibre-based racing car, which won the northern final of a national competition. The range of charities supported by the school is impressive. Public services, such as the police, health and social services, enrich the curriculum with contributions on personal safety and healthy lifestyles.
48. The school has good links with its many partner primary schools and there is a range of curriculum links which help to bridge Year 6 to Year 7 transition years. For example, pupils from primary schools attend specially organised days on engineering and science; there are ongoing projects in English and geography; and a group of Year 11 girls have created 'Story

Sacks' for early years children. Primary school children have also benefited from the school's computer technician support. Very important links have been formed with Edinburgh University as part of the school's specialist status, ranging from construction to chemical and electronic engineering.

### **Sixth form**

49. Parents' views on the sixth form are positive. Sixth form students are positive about what the school provides and achieves. Students confirm that they are given very good opportunities to take responsibility and are treated as young adults. Community links provide students with a very good range of opportunities for voluntary work. Many sixth formers do voluntary work as part of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, Millennium Volunteers or the Craven Volunteer Centre. Charitable fundraising is an important part of the activities in which sixth formers play a key part. There are growing links with the local boys' grammar school. A common timetable operates, leading to students from both schools taking seven of the A level courses on offer. Students from both schools work on plays, musicals and attend Oxbridge entrants' conferences together. The sixth form has developed close links with a large number of secondary schools. As a result, around a third of sixth form entrants now join from several other schools in the local authority and two adjacent local authorities. As part of the school's plans to stretch its more able students, discussions are underway with Leeds Metropolitan University to offer a range of undergraduate courses on engineering, entrepreneurship and enterprise. There are equally important links with Bradford University, in relation to archaeology and as part of explaining and promoting careers in science and engineering.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The school is very well led by the headteacher who has a clear vision for continuous improvement and very high academic aspirations for students set within a creative, technological, enterprising environment. Key staff provide good leadership and management across the school. Governance is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the headteacher and governors is very effective in running a very good school that provides very good value for money.
- The school's finances are very well managed to help the school to achieve its educational priorities.
- Leadership and management of key staff are good.
- Good use is made of data to monitor students' performance and to assess the value-added progress of all students across all years.
- The ongoing monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is not as well planned, as it might be, both at whole-school and at subject level.
- Governors do not comply fully with the legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students and to make satisfactory provision for religious education in Years 7 – 11 and in the sixth form.

### **Commentary**

50. The headteacher provides very high quality leadership and an exciting vision for the school and for the place of young women in the future world of work and in society as a whole. She has coped admirably since her appointment, two and a half years ago, with a series of challenges that have seen a large deficit budget overturned, imbalances in staffing addressed, a successful restructuring of the roles of teachers with responsibilities for subject provision and student support, and the re-shaping of the senior leadership team. In addition, she has gained specialist school status for engineering, re-modelled the curriculum, and re-modelled the support available for teachers in line with the Government's workforce reform agenda. Throughout this time, high standards have been sustained in almost all areas of the school's work, sixth form results have improved, and the overall value-added progress that students make across all years has continued to increase.
51. The governing body has also reformed committee structures and ways of working, and is very involved in helping to shape the vision and direction of the school. The chair of governors is very ambitious for success and governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school. They ensure that they receive a regular and high quality source of performance information from senior leaders, in order to challenge the school and individuals to achieve higher outcomes, at the same time providing appropriate levels of support. Governance is very good overall despite the shortcoming of not complying fully with the legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students and of not making satisfactory provision for religious education in Years 7 – 11 and in the sixth form.
52. The quality of the school's strategic planning is good. There is a very clear long-term vision for the school's further development, built on firm principles and goals. Actions are focused on raising standards even higher through the development of the school's specialist engineering status, and through creating more enterprising and technological opportunities, with directly related experiences of the worlds of higher education and work. All actions are carefully costed and senior leaders and governors play a major role in not only ensuring that they are carried out to agreed timescales, but in also evaluating outcomes and impact on learning. The quality of similar approaches to planning across all other areas of the school's work is inconsistent.
53. The school's senior leadership team is supportive of the headteacher in sharing high aspirations for the school, with a relentless focus on students' achievement. Good use is made of data to monitor students' performance and to assess the value-added progress of all students across all years. The deputy headteacher in charge of this aspect has produced a wealth of very useful information which has been made readily available to all teachers through the school's network. Senior leaders and governors have begun to use this data effectively to hold to account key post-holders. As yet, not all directors of study, subject leaders, learning managers and personal tutors are using this valuable information consistently to good effect.
54. The quality of leadership beyond the senior leadership team and across the school is good. Leadership is very good in English, mathematics, physical education, business studies, art and design, drama and music. It is good in science, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages, ICT and citizenship. Leadership is satisfactory in history, but unsatisfactory in religious education where the school is taking steps to recruit a replacement head of department. The leadership shown by the school's recently appointed learning managers is good. Leaders generally act as very good role models for other staff and students, and show a high degree of

commitment to promoting equality and inclusive practices. The needs of the individual child are very much paramount in their views. Most teams in the school are led well and are effective in keeping abreast of curriculum developments and modern teaching techniques.

55. Management is good overall. It is very good in English, physical education, business studies, art and design, drama and music. It is good in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages, ICT and citizenship. Management is satisfactory in history, but unsatisfactory in religious education. The management by the school's recently appointed learning managers is good. All staff are clear about their roles, responsibilities and personal objectives, and have appropriate access to relevant support and professional development. Approaches to evaluating the work of individual teams are good, particularly to reviewing students' overall performance outcomes. The ongoing monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is less well planned, both at whole-school and at subject level. Arrangements for the recruitment, retention and deployment of staff are good. Performance management routines are established and, although some individuals' objectives lack precision, are generally effective in bringing about improvement.
56. The leadership and management of special educational needs are good. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has a clear vision for securing and promoting the inclusion of all children in the work of the school. The SENCO is aware of students who are potentially vulnerable, and has started to monitor formally their progress and achievement. This includes students with special educational needs, with medical, emotional and social needs, those who are the lowest attainers in the school, and those who are gifted and talented. Individual support plans are being introduced to support particular students with additional needs, for example, a small group of Year 11 potentially low attaining students. The school is currently reviewing criteria for identifying and supporting more directly gifted and talented students in all years.
57. The school's finances are very well managed. Procedures for financial control and management are outstanding. The governors' finance committee adopts a highly professional approach to ensuring that best value principles are central to the school's use of resources, and to helping the school to achieve its educational priorities. Value for money is very good.

### **Sixth form**

58. The leadership of the sixth form is good and has made significant improvements in provision since the last inspection. The focus has been on providing high quality learning and personal development for all students, broadening curriculum choice and raising further achievement. The school has been successful in all three areas.
59. Subject leadership and management are very good. Leadership is excellent in music and very good in English, mathematics, design and technology, business studies and drama. Leadership is good in science, geography and modern foreign languages. The quality of management is similar to that of leadership, with the exception of mathematics, where it is good.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,817,448
Total expenditure	2,741,476
Expenditure per pupil	4,008

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	50,639
Balance carried forward to the next year	126,665

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

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' command of the subject is excellent.
- Students' attitudes are excellent in Years 10 and 11 and very good in Years 7 – 9.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is very good in all years.
- In Years 7 – 9, some opportunities are missed in lessons to raise further students' achievement, and the very good procedure for tracking the progress of students is inconsistently used.

#### Commentary

	<b>Years 7 - 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

#### *Examination results*

60. Results, in Year 9 national tests 2004, were very high in comparison with the national average and well above the performance of similar schools. In both GCSE English and English Literature examinations in 2004, results were very high in comparison with the national average.

#### *Standards and achievement*

61. Standards on entry to the school are well above average. Standards of work seen are well above average for all students. In Years 7 – 9, standards seen in lessons are above average rather than well above because teachers do not always challenge students to reach the standard of which they are capable. When written work is taken into account, overall standards in Years 7 – 9 are well above average. By Year 9, students' speaking and listening skills are good; their reading and writing skills are very good. By Year 11, students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are all very good. Overall, students achieve very well in Years 7 – 11, including gifted students, higher and relatively lower attaining students, those from ethnic minorities and those with special educational needs.

#### *Teaching and learning*

62. Teaching and learning are very good throughout Years 7 – 11. Teachers pass their enthusiasm for English on to students. They give students a wide range of interesting tasks, to which students respond very well, completing homework to a high standard and often researching subjects in depth.
63. In Years 7 – 9, reading and writing, as shown in students' written work, are very good. However, in lessons, teachers sometimes do not challenge students sufficiently. Students are not asked actively to explore their own understanding when dealing with word classes. They are asked simply to consider what Shakespeare's language means in modern English rather than what it indicates about characters. Teachers do not consistently use the established procedures for setting targets and tracking students' progress, so that students are unsure about what they need to do to improve.
64. In lessons in Years 10 and 11, teachers promote very good learning. They very expertly develop speaking and listening skills by allowing every student who wishes to speak to do so and by encouraging students to build on previous contributions. Consequently, students debate complex issues at a very sophisticated level, for example, when they relate the language and structure of two Browning poems to the theme of jealousy. These debates promote independence in thinking, which is reflected in writing which is always very good and sometimes excellent. By Year 11, for example, students write high quality essays on very sophisticated topics, such as when they use a quotation by George Orwell on tragedy as the starting point for an essay on specific scenes in "Romeo and Juliet". Teachers set challenging tasks and targets, monitor progress very carefully and support students of all abilities very well.
65. The statutory requirements for ICT are fulfilled. However, teachers and students do not routinely have access to technology to enhance learning in lessons. Students debate moral, social and spiritual issues very well. For example, in discussing the poem "On My First Sonne", Year 11 pupils show respect for and understanding of the poet's feelings and speculate as to why there is no word in English for someone who has lost a child.

#### *Leadership and management*

66. Leadership and management are very good. The director of studies has a clear vision for the subject, is focused on the continuing drive to raise standards and adjusts procedures in the light of regular reviews. Her work on transfer from primary schools and on transition from Year 9 – Year 10 is innovative. She has built an harmonious, dedicated and knowledgeable team. Improvement since the last inspection is good. In particular, assessment procedures are now robust. However, they are inconsistently used in Years 7– 9.

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

67. Standards of language and literacy across the school are well above average. For example, in geography, students present information to the class, communicating technical information clearly, so that the class can sustain a debate on the issues raised. In art and design, students read books from the library and the studio, so that they use technical language with precision. In mathematics and history, students write well-argued pieces in Year 11 which make complex ideas clear and engaging. The school's current focus on speaking and listening is an appropriate strategy for further



raising the achievement of high attaining students. However, the impact of this strategy is not consistent across all subjects.

## Modern foreign languages

Provision for modern foreign languages is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standards reached by most students are well above average.
- Teaching is very good and promotes very good achievement in Years 7 – 11.
- The attitudes of pupils towards their languages learning are very good.
- The modern languages faculty is well led and managed.
- There is insufficient sharing of expertise by teachers through direct observation of each other's teaching.

### Commentary

	<b>Years 7 - 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Examination results

68. Teachers' assessments of students' attainment by the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well above average. In French, the proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A\* to C in 2004 was very high compared with the average for schools nationally. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades A\* and A was exceptionally high, and four students were commended for having achieved examination results in the top five marks nationally. However, one in six students failed to gain a pass at A\* to C and overall, students did less well in French than in the other subjects which they studied. In German, the proportion of students gaining GCSE A\* to C grades was very high, and many students achieved the highest grades.

### Standards and achievement

69. Students in Years 7 – 9 reach standards which are well above average in both French and German, and the highest-attaining students perform very well. Standards are particularly high in written work, in the students' understanding of language and in their ability to assimilate complex language patterns. The achievement of all students, including those from minority ethnic heritages, is very good. The very few students with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and talented, also achieve very well. In Years 10 and 11, the same picture continues in both languages. Standards are well above average and achievement is uniformly very good whatever the students' prior attainment. This is because teachers' expectations are high and teachers make good use of a range of strategies to develop language understanding, and to prepare students for external examinations.

### Teaching and learning

70. Most teaching is very good throughout the school. It is slightly better in German than in French. Teaching is characterised by the very high expectations of students by the teachers. Students respond extremely well to the range of very effective strategies, including the use of ICT, for promoting language development. Most lessons contain a variety of interesting and imaginative activities, which retain students' attention and encourage them to concentrate and to try hard. Only in very isolated cases are the teachers' demands not high enough, and where this is the case, it is reflected in the students' achievement. The faculty ensures that assessment in lessons helps students to achieve their potential. Most pupils know what level of work they have reached and what is required to reach the level or the grade above. Whilst work is not purely examination-oriented, there is a clear focus on what is needed to bring about success. There is a wide range of enrichment activities to supplement classroom learning in languages, including work-experience abroad and a student exchange in collaboration with a neighbouring school.

### *Leadership and management*

71. Leadership and management are good. There is a very good team spirit and a shared vision of the future. The director of studies has grasped the challenge to drive up standards. Subject improvement plans for the future represent a good agenda for building on current strengths, and there is clear evidence that the subject is moving forward strongly. Arrangements for evaluating the work of the subject are good and there are suitable policies for promoting and contributing to the school's specialist status. Teachers are working hard to develop new international links. There is no formal and systematic approach to assessing the quality of teaching and learning in lessons and therefore missed opportunities to share at first hand the very real expertise which teachers possess. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, both in the quality of teaching and in the achievement of the students.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- 2004 examination and test results were very high compared to national averages.
- Teaching is very good, providing clarity in developing new ideas.
- Very good attitudes towards mathematics help students achieve very well in lessons and across all years.
- The use of data to provide appropriate targets and current levels of attainment is underdeveloped, reducing students' awareness of how to improve.

### **Commentary**

	<b>Years 7 - 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### *Examination results*

72. In 2004, Year 9 test results were very high compared to the national average. Results were slightly down on those of 2003. However, over time, there has been a rising trend in line with national improvement. Average points were in line with all grammar schools, with results above average for those attaining the higher grades. This represented very good achievement by students. Results were above those in English and science. In 2004, Year 11 GCSE results were very high compared to the national average and the standards expected in grammar schools. As a result of very good achievement by all students, half of students gained A\*/A grades. Results were above those gained in 2003.

### *Standards and achievement*

73. Achievement in lessons is very good overall; better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 – 9. By the end of Year 9, overall standards are well above those expected nationally. Work seen in students' books is very well presented, with mathematical rigour, and

shows that they have very good attitudes towards the subject. However, there is a small minority of students who do not apply themselves as well as they might and this reduces the progress they make. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above national expectations, representing very good achievement during Years 10 and 11. Students are very confident in the use of algebra. The majority of students work confidently on the highest levels of work for the 'Higher' tier examination, for which all but a few students are entered. There is no difference in the achievement of students from different ethnic or social backgrounds or those with special learning needs.

### *Teaching and learning*

74. Teaching and learning are very good overall, better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 – 9, where teaching is good overall. Teachers' very good subject knowledge provides clarity in the development of new ideas and builds well on students' previous knowledge. Lessons have pace and challenge, and extension activities provide very good learning opportunities for the most able students. Teachers use ICT presentations well as teaching tools, but there are limited opportunities for students to use computers to enrich their learning. Teachers' assessments are regular and accurate. The encouragement of students to mark their own work is developing independent learning skills well. However, ongoing assessments and lesson objectives do not inform students directly of the levels or grades at which they are currently working.

### *Leadership and management*

75. Leadership of the subject is very good. The director of studies has a clear vision for the future of mathematics in the school and is developing new courses to offer wider opportunities for students. The very experienced team of teachers works well to provide opportunities for students to do their best. The head of department acts as an excellent role model for students to emulate, encouraging enthusiasm for the subject. Management is good. The department is well organised, with good monitoring of teaching and progress of teaching groups within each year. However, use of external data and standards for setting students' targets is not sufficiently developed to enable them to understand how to improve their levels of attainment. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

76. Students' mathematical skills are well above average and support their learning well in other subjects. All subjects expect students to be able to handle mathematical information well, and accept students' skills as a resource to be used. Science, geography and business studies make very good use of these skills. In science, students use a wide variety of compound units and teachers utilise students' advanced skills when studying refractive index. In geography and business studies, there is much use made of students' data analysis and graphical skills in investigating patterns and trends. Students are confident in their use of business-related calculations. There has been whole-school training and an audit of provision of numeracy across the curriculum. The co-ordinator has produced a school policy in co-operation with other departments, and has informed other subject areas of what students are expected to know at each stage. Standard formats for mathematical presentation are available on the school's computer network.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in National tests and in GCSE examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11 are very high.
- Students of all ages achieve very well.
- Very good teaching leads to this very good achievement.
- There is good leadership and management of the department.
- Students have insufficient equipment to carry out data logging.

### Commentary

	<b>Years 7 - 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Examination results

77. National Curriculum results for students aged 14, in 2004, were very high when compared with all and similar schools. There have been very high standards over the three years up to and including 2004. GCSE results were also very high when compared with the national average, whether from the double award science course or from separate sciences.

### Standards and achievement

78. Students enter the school with well above average standards in science. They achieve very well across Years 7 – 11, so that the overall standards that they attain are very high, with some exceptional performances. Standards in work seen, in Years 7 – 11, are well above average. Most students have well above average literacy and numeracy skills which help them to obtain the higher grades. They have well above expected knowledge and understanding of the principles of fair testing, which they apply well in their practical work. The few ethnic minority students are well integrated and attain very well. Students use ICT very effectively in their work. They have many opportunities to use the interactive whiteboards so that by Year 9, they are giving presentations to their peers about alternative energy supplies. Money from the specialist engineering status has been spent well to improve the use of ICT, particularly for software to support learning. However, because there are insufficient sensors and interfaces, students generally only have opportunities to experience data logging through teacher demonstration.

### Teaching and learning

79. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers can be proud of the work they do for their students. The main strengths in teaching include excellent subject knowledge, very high expectations, and very good planning to use a wide range of resources and activities. Students have outstanding attitudes to their learning. The quality of their written work is excellent so that all have very complete records from which to revise. The provision for gifted and talented students is insufficiently targeted to need. Teachers mostly only make provision for these students through general extension work in lessons.

### *Leadership and management*

80. The relatively newly appointed director of study provides good leadership and management. Work in the department is divided into the three separate sciences with separate subject leaders and teachers. It is testimony to the director of studies' leadership skills that teamwork is very strong. All science teachers and technicians work well together and are supportive of each other. The technicians are very efficient. However, they are becoming increasingly stretched as the number of groups and students opting for sciences in the sixth form increases. Teachers have identified opportunities to include engineering in their schemes of work, but there is still more to be done in this area. Some staff will require more professional development before the full advantages of engineering status can be realised. The quality of the written risk assessments in the chemistry department is exemplary and might be used as a model for biology and physics. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, in particular provision for ICT.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are very high standards in the GCSE short course.
- The director of studies has a clear vision and commitment to develop ICT in the school.
- Students apply their ICT skills well in other subjects of the curriculum and throughout the school.
- The statutory Year 9 assessment is insufficiently rigorous.

### **Commentary**

	<b>Years 7- 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Above average	There is no teaching of ICT beyond Year 9
Achievement	Good	
Teaching and Learning	Good	

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

### *Examination results*

81. In 2004, results in the GCSE short course, taken at the end of Year 9, were very high when compared with the national average. The reported National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 are very high, but are extrapolated from the GCSE coursework marks achieved by the students, and not based on an assessment of their work against National Curriculum criteria.

### *Standards and achievement*

82. Students' attainment on entry to the school is well above average. By the end of Year 9, their knowledge and practical skills are very high when compared to national expectations. This is because they are provided with courses that challenge and enable them to achieve a GCSE qualification. Students' overall achievement in Years 7 – 9 is good. They can refine searches using the Internet, word-process confidently and take account of the audience and purpose when presenting their work through posters, leaflets, presentations or web pages. They can use databases well to mail merge letters and spreadsheets to cost projects. Students' understanding of the theory associated with the subject is well developed. For example, a Year 8 student with visual impairment eloquently explained the technology associated with her laptop to stimulate a discussion about website design and the importance of ICT in society. Low attainers review their work well as it progresses, whilst higher attainers test and evaluate confidently their solutions against desired outcomes. Minority ethnic students achieve as well as their peers, and students with special learning needs make very good progress. There are no ICT courses provided for Year 10 and 11 students, so evidence of standards against national benchmark data is unavailable.

### *Teaching and learning*

83. Teaching and learning are good across Years 7 – 9. Lessons feature a range of interesting tasks that ensure students remain motivated and enthusiastic. Teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge, which is used effectively to ask searching questions and to stimulate discussion. Lessons are well planned and teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and how they should behave. Good use is made of whiteboard technology to display clear learning objectives and to engage students in demonstrating techniques to others. Less use is made of its interactive facilities. The development of students' literacy and numeracy skills is good through teaching that places emphasis on the continuous review of work in progress.
84. Students apply themselves well to the tasks at hand, demonstrating the capacity to work well independently, as well as in a group. Teachers make good arrangements to promote this style of learning and the privilege of laptop loan and access to ICT suites is not abused. Most students use home computers confidently to extend their studies, transferring information via personal storage devices or using 'Simply Click', the school's Internet-based messaging and learning system, to access their own work or teacher provided resources. Teachers are less skilled at providing different activities or resources in the lessons to fully stretch the highest-attaining students.

### *Leadership and management*

85. Leadership and management are good. ICT was a key issue for improvement in the last inspection report, but a recently appointed enthusiastic director of studies has changed the curriculum, improved planning and team effectiveness, and has ensured that all subjects contribute to the development of ICT capability. This represents good progress. Subjects are well supported by good resources and technical expertise and their plans now show how ICT will be developed through Years 7 – 13. However, there is as yet no monitoring of the effectiveness of this cross-curricular approach to learning and evaluation of the progress that students make.

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

86. The use of ICT in other areas of the curriculum is good. The demand for resources sometimes outstrips supply, but all students apply their ICT skills confidently. Particularly good examples range from composition in music, digital image manipulation in art and design and for backdrops in drama, through to function plotting in mathematics, data logging in science and computer-aided design and manufacture in technology.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Students attain well above average standards by the end of Year 9, and in GCSE examinations.
- Relationships are very good and students have very good attitudes to learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Leadership and management are good, although there is inconsistent use by teachers of precise learning outcomes to support students' work in Years 7 – 9, and of the outcomes of the monitoring of the department's work.
- There is insufficient planned training for staff to use ICT innovatively for teaching and assessing.



## Commentary

	Years 7 - 9	Years 10 - 11
Standards seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

### *Examination results*

87. 2004 teachers' assessments show that, by the end of Year 9, students attained well above average standards. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were very high, with well over half the students attaining A\* or A grades. Minority ethnic students attain at least as well as their peers.

### *Standards and achievement*

88. Students enter the school with above average standards, but inconsistent subject experiences. Throughout Years 7 – 11, standards seen in lessons during the inspection were above average, although more inconsistent in some lessons in Years 7 – 9 than in Years 10 – 11. Achievement across Years 7 – 11 is good overall. In Year 7, many students re-lay the foundations of work more appropriate for younger children, but, by Year 9, their geographical skills are good. In a similarly inconsistent manner, planning for many lessons caters very well for the needs of average and above average students, but many of the highest-attaining students do not reach the very high standards of which they are capable. Nevertheless, all students make good progress in acquiring the geographical skills of investigation. Their ability to use maps and diagrams to research sources and to answer key questions about the geography of their local area, and other parts of the world, is well developed by the age of 14. Teachers' planning ensures that students' achievement is much more consistent across Years 10 and 11. Fieldwork is very good and there is a more even depth of understanding of the topics studied, such as the work on the impact of urban change, where pupils made very perceptive responses to questions about both social and economic issues. Minority ethnic students achieve as well as their peers and students with additional learning needs make good progress overall.

### *Teaching and learning*

89. The expertise and commitment of teachers are very good and this lays the foundation for good standards of teaching and learning throughout Years 7 – 11. The variety of activities experienced during lessons, and the manner in which these are presented by the teachers, result in students' very good attitudes, high levels of motivation and periods of intense concentration. Good opportunities are provided to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills, and these help to ensure above average standards in students' folders. Students work very well together, collaborating effectively to help each other's progress. They use ICT well to research and present their work. As yet, teachers do not assess formally the ICT capability that is being developed by their students. In some lessons in Years 7 and 8, insufficient thought is given by teachers to precise learning outcomes, especially for extension activities that are needed to stretch the higher attainers. This often prevents lessons from becoming very good or better.

### *Leadership and management*

90. Subject leadership and management are good. The director of studies has a very clear vision of high quality geography fostering a strong commitment to global citizenship. This pervades

the good lesson planning, as well as teachers' and students' attitudes, so that there is a very strong team ethos. Some of the evaluation outcomes of the work of the department are not systematically addressed through the otherwise good subject improvement plan. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection, although accommodation is often cramped and unsuitable for group work with large-scale maps.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work seen in lesson are well above average in Years 7 – 11.
- Teaching, learning and students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
- Students' attitudes, behaviour and the quality of relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- The checking of students' achievement and the use of data to plan for learning during Years 7 – 9 are inconsistent.
- Teachers do not specifically plan or target activities to challenge higher attaining students.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to support students' learning.

### Commentary

	<b>Years 7 - 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

### Examination results

91. The 2004 GCSE examination results are well above the national average for students achieving A\*-C, and very high for those achieving A\*-G grades. History performed well in relation to other subjects in the school, representing an improvement since the time of the last inspection. Outcomes of teachers' assessments, at the end of Year 9, indicate very high levels of attainment in relation to national averages and similar schools.

### Standards and achievement

92. Standards seen during the inspection in Years 7 – 9 are well above average, representing good achievement in relation to students' above average starting points in the skills of history. The rate of learning, however, is uneven, with students making the most significant gains during Year 9. Standards of work, seen in Years 10 – 11, are consistently well above the national average with a significant proportion of students' achieving very highly. This represents very good achievement and is due to the very good quality of teaching. Very good students' attitudes and positive relationships between students and teachers also contribute well to learning throughout Years 7 – 11. By the end of Year 9, students can identify and explain multi-

causal factors for particular events and become more adept at analytical writing. They can also identify different interpretations of historical events, although their ability to explain the reasons behind these different interpretations is generally weaker. By the end of Year 11, higher-attaining students can explain complex issues well using their extensive historical knowledge. They are confident in explaining different historical interpretations. Written work is well structured, with clear judgements substantiated by well-chosen evidence, as demonstrated in work on the reasons why British troops were sent into Northern Ireland. Lower attaining students make gains in organising and presenting work, but their analysis of sources and explanation of reasons for different historical interpretations, is weaker. There is no discernable difference between the achievements of students from different minority ethnic backgrounds. Students with special educational needs make good progress across Years 7 – 11.

### *Teaching and learning*

93. Teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 7 – 9, recent changes to staffing have led to timetable amendments that have disrupted learning for some students. Lessons seen ranged from satisfactory to unsatisfactory, but were satisfactory overall. Nevertheless, extensive work sampling in Years 7 – 9 indicates that these lessons are not truly representative of the work of the department. When taking into account work completed over a longer period of time, teaching and learning are good. Features of lessons seen in Years 7 – 9 include a lack of clarity regarding intended learning outcomes, lessons dominated by teacher talk and insufficient levels of challenge to promote good learning.
94. In Years 10 – 11, teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use assessment data and their very good subject knowledge to establish high expectations and to challenge students' thinking. Intended learning outcomes are clear, lessons are well structured to maximise learning, and a range of activities is used to engage and motivate students. The very good relationships that exist between students and teachers contribute to the positive learning ethos.
95. Throughout Years 7 – 11, there is insufficient variation of tasks to challenge students of the highest ability and, as at the time of the last inspection, the use of ICT to support the development of historical skills is weak. Support for the development of literacy across the curriculum is good, as is the department's contribution to the development of students' social, moral and cultural understanding. Support for the development of numeracy and spirituality across the curriculum is less well developed. Assessment procedures in Years 10 and 11 are very good. The marking of work provides students with clear information about what they do well and what they need to do to improve. In Years 7 – 9, there has been some improvement since the last inspection in developing assessments based on national curriculum criteria. However, this is not yet consistently understood or applied. Annual reports of students' progress to parents contain insufficient information on the gains that students make in their knowledge, skills and understanding of history, and targets for improvement are inadequate.

### *Leadership and management*

96. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staffing changes, necessitating interim arrangements for the leadership of the subject, have slowed down planned development in a number of key areas, for example, improvements to assessment procedures in Year 7 – 9 and improvements in the use of ICT to support learning in

Years 7 – 11. The department has an improvement plan, which identifies clear priorities. However, there are insufficiently precise strategies and criteria by which to monitor and evaluate progress. No costs are associated with key activities. Self-evaluation procedures are not yet sufficiently embedded in the work of the department to drive further improvement. Schemes of work provide a satisfactory framework for the teaching of history and the delivery of key aspects of citizenship. The department is well resourced and effective use is made of fieldwork activities, all available staffing and accommodation to support learning. There has been satisfactory overall improvement since the last inspection.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The locally Agreed Syllabus is not being rigorously implemented in Years 7 – 11.
- A very large proportion of teaching and learning time is being lost in Years 7, 8 and 9 because students follow the GCSE short course a year early and, currently, there is insufficient expertise in the department to help students to make up the time.
- Teaching and learning are largely unsatisfactory, as are current leadership and management arrangements.
- Students are not learning enough about religions. Too much work is about moral and social issues.

### Commentary

	<b>Years 7 - 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory

### *Examination results*

97. Students have not taken a GCSE examination in recent years and there were no available teachers' assessments of Year 9 outcomes in 2004.

### *Standards and achievement*

98. The standards seen during the inspection in Years 7 - 9 are below those indicated in the locally Agreed Syllabus. Students' knowledge and understanding of the central beliefs systems that underpin religious customs and practice across world religions

are unsatisfactory. Their knowledge and understanding of the central teaching of world religions are also unsatisfactory. Students' knowledge and understanding are stronger in terms of learning from religions than they are in learning about religions. The overall achievement of students is unsatisfactory. The standards seen during the inspection in Year 10 are broadly in line with those indicated in the locally Agreed Syllabus, and achievement is better in this year than in other years. Some students have a good knowledge and understanding of different forms of Christian worship and ceremony. These include rites of passage, such as baptism and communion. By the end of Year 11, however, standards are well below those required by the Agreed Syllabus. The amount of written work completed in Year 11 is minimal. Several drawings have been completed by some students, but these, along with the discussion work, are almost exclusively about moral and social issues. In the discussion work, students express their views well, but are less capable in referring to religious viewpoints on the topics under discussion.

### *Teaching and learning*

99. Overall, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Not all teachers have sufficient subject expertise and knowledge to engage students in learning about world religions and there is over-reliance on the textbook as a major resource. In many lessons, the use of the same textbook neither motivates students nor affords sufficient challenge and expectation. Content tends to be dominated by social and moral issues, rather than spiritual and religious understanding. In the worst instances, the insufficient demands made on the students result in many losing interest and beginning to engage in activities not directly related to the learning. In some lessons, however, teaching and learning are good. Here, the teacher demonstrates clearly up-to-date knowledge that ensures that lessons are well planned and contain a sequence of activities that inspire all students to participate. These lessons move at a fast pace and the teaching brings a strong body of new learning to the students' attention.

### *Leadership and management*

100. Leadership and management of the department are currently in a period of transition and are unsatisfactory. The overall expertise of the current staffing to deliver religious education is unsatisfactory. At present, there are insufficient permanent teachers with appropriate knowledge in the department to take the subject forward in an effective way. The requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus have yet to be reflected in a scheme of work and in the teaching and learning. Since the last inspection, significant progress has been made on making appropriate time for the delivery of religious education. However, overall progress is unsatisfactory, given the concerns related to teaching and learning, and the impact on standards and achievement.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of work are well above average in Years 10 – 11.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers possess very good subject expertise.
- Relationships amongst staff and students are very good.

- Assessment is sometimes inconsistent in Years 7 – 9 and is not used effectively to plan for improvements in teaching and learning.
- Planning work for the work of gifted and talented students is unsatisfactory.

### Commentary

	<b>Years 7 - 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Examination results

101. 2004 teachers' assessments of standards of students' work, by the age of 14, were well above average, with many students achieving the highest levels. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, results were very high compared with the national average.

### Standards and achievement

102. Standards of work in Years 7 – 9 are above the national average. By the end of Year 9, students have a good grounding in the design process and can use good presentation skills to communicate their design ideas. In Years 10 and 11, the work seen is well above average, and a significant number of students produce very good design portfolios as part of the examination course. ICT is used very effectively to raise the quality of presentation in this work. All students achieve well in Years 7 – 9, including those from minority ethnic heritages and those with special educational needs, when compared with standards on entry. This is because teachers concentrate on developing good making skills and on helping students to understand, then apply the design process. All students achieve very well in Years 10 – 11, given their standards at the end of Year 9. Students acquire knowledge quickly and show increasing confidence in their ability to make high quality products as they progress through Year 10. They are challenged to focus on the requirements of the examination and are helped to reach the higher grades by the end of Year 11. Students' achievement is better in Years 10 – 11 than in Years 7 – 9 because teachers assess their work more precisely and more consistently, against shared criteria, and use the outcomes of assessments to convey clearly what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.

### Teaching and learning

103. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 – 9 and very good in Years 10 – 11. All teachers possess very good subject knowledge and this is used effectively to plan and deliver well-structured lessons. They work hard to establish and maintain productive relationships, which lead to very good attitudes and responses by students. Teachers have good skills when working individually with students and, through careful but challenging discussion, demand high standards of work. Individual and group work is often used effectively to give students opportunities to learn in different ways. This is at its best in a Year 10 product design lesson, where students completed an analysis

task using high quality artefacts hired from the specialist college trust. Students usually work with great enterprise and purpose due to the clarity of instruction and objectives which are shared by staff. There is good use of number in measuring, weighing and costing students' work. Students now make very good use of ICT in Years 10 and 11 when preparing portfolios of work for assessment. Teachers' expertise is continuing to develop in this area and now computer aided design and manufacture is planned for all years. Teachers know their students very well and ensure that individual support is matched appropriately to their needs. However, there is very little specifically planned work to address the needs of gifted and talented students. The technician is used very effectively to support Year 11 in the making of their final GCSE projects. Assessment is good in Years 7 - 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 – 9, work is marked regularly, but does not consistently include specific comments for improvement. Verbal feedback in class is more helpful to students to tell them how they can improve. In Years 10 – 11, teachers are more rigorous in their use of assessment to enable students to achieve higher standards.

### *Leadership and management*

104. Leadership and management are good. All teachers share a common desire to ensure that all students enjoy and achieve well in this subject. The subject leader has a clear vision and has identified key priorities for improvement over the next three years. Good use is made of performance information to check the progress made by students. There are no specific arrangements made to modify the work for the highest-attaining students. Procedures for assessing the quality of teaching and learning in lessons are unsatisfactory. Technical support is very good, but insufficient time is allocated to the subject to meet its rapidly expanding needs. There has been good progress overall since the last inspection, particularly in the investment in computer aided design and manufacture resources. Nevertheless, computers are still not used enough in food technology in order to provide wider learning opportunities for all students.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Standards are well above average in lessons and GCSE results are very high.
- Leadership and management are very good and promote very effective teaching and learning.
- Students are fully engaged by the very good teaching and display very good attitudes to their work.
- There is good use of computers by students for research purposes, but less effective use of modern technologies for creative ends.

## Commentary

	<b>Years 7 - 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

### *Examination results*

105. All students exceeded the expected national average outcome in the 2004 end of Year 9 teachers' assessments. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, all students achieved A\*-C grades, which is significantly better than the national average for similar schools. These very high results are due to consistently very good achievement across Years 7 – 11. The small number of minority ethnic students achieves similar high results to their peers.

### *Standards and achievement*

106. Students arrive in the school with average standards and experiences in art and design. In Years 7 – 9, they acquire the essential visual language of the use of line, tone, colour, pattern, shape and texture in two-dimensional exercises, and shape and form in three-dimensional work, to a well above average standard. Considering the standards demonstrated early in Year 7, this represents very good achievement. In open-ended tasks, students develop creative and problem-solving qualities. They increase their knowledge of a range of artists and are able to enrich their own original work with new techniques. In Years 10 – 11, students continue to achieve very well and, by the end of Year 11, they achieve very high standards. In lessons, standards of work seen are never less than well above average. Students demonstrate very good levels of understanding, skills and imagination. They know how to use their sketchbooks to record, experiment with, and develop ideas. Observational drawing and painting is very good. They know how to develop a theme from initial orthodox study into new creative forms. Colour is particularly well understood and applied with verve. Considering their abilities at the start of the course, the scale and quality of their current work represents very good achievement. Gifted and talented students are given more challenging extension tasks and achieve well. Students identified as being at risk of under-performing are closely monitored and receive effective advice and guidance. Those with special educational needs and the few with English as an additional language make good progress.

### *Teaching and learning*

107. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. The individual guidance they give to students enables them to improve rapidly. The regular, individual, practical craft demonstrations encourage students to develop the skills they need to express their own ideas. Lessons are well planned. Teachers share lesson objectives with students and this results in them knowing clearly what they have to do. Lessons are varied and interesting, engaging students to the full.



Teachers and students work hard together, resulting in very productive lessons. Work is regularly and accurately marked and assessed. Students know what they have to do to improve and to meet their targets. They are enthusiastic, attentive, and apply what they learn. They absorb new knowledge and, because they are encouraged to be inquisitive, they want to know more. Purposeful homework is regularly set and students respond positively. By the end of Year 9, they have acquired a range of essential skills and knowledge, and this enables them, in following years, to develop effective independent approaches to their work.

108. Students know how to use computers as research tools. In their portrait studies, some Year 8 pupils manipulate colour variations in the style of Andy Warhol, but not all pupils are exposed to this creative use of computers. All are acquiring and using an appropriate art vocabulary confidently, because of the constant teacher emphasis on language skills. All regularly annotate their work and, in their research and written appraisal of art, record facts and express personal opinions and judgements well. In Years 10 - 11, students are able to use their art to express their social and moral concerns. There are frequent study visits to local and national art galleries, which broadens students' awareness of both historical and contemporary art. Students form an understanding and an appreciation of the art forms of other cultures through discussion, research and practical craftwork.

#### *Leadership and management*

109. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader has high expectations and is completely focused on ensuring that all students achieve to the highest standards. Teachers of art and design operate as an effective team. Subject self-evaluation records provide an accurate picture of how well art is performing. The high quality of displayed work throughout the school celebrates students' achievements and sets exemplar standards. A comprehensive database of students' achievement has been established to which all staff contribute. Issues arising from the previous inspection have been well-addressed and high standards re-established. Innovative links, with partner primary schools, make students aware of relationships between art and science. Because twice as many students opt for art than is the average nationally, and, in addition, because students are so productive in lessons, resources are stretched in meeting their needs, despite the fact that funding per student is at the national average.

#### **Drama**

Provision in drama is **very good**.

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

- Very good teaching supports students in the sophisticated presentation of complex ideas and in them becoming independent learners.
- Students' excellent attitudes contribute to their very good achievement.
- Drama makes a very good contribution to citizenship and to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- There is no writing in Years 7 – 9.

## Commentary

	<b>Years 7 – 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### *Examination results*

110. There are no GCSE results because drama is not currently taught in Year 11.

### *Standards and achievement*

111. Standards of work seen are well above average for all students. All students achieve very well in Years 7 – 10, including gifted students, higher and relatively lower attaining students, those from ethnic minorities and those with special educational needs. By the end of Year 9, students work constructively in groups, listening carefully to each other's views, extending their ideas and evaluating their work as they go along. In Year 10, students have added to those skills a deeper understanding of dramatic techniques and their appropriate use.

### *Teaching and learning*

112. Teaching and learning are very good in all years. In Years 7 – 9, teachers carefully plan a series of ever more challenging tasks in lessons, so that by the end of the lesson students demonstrate the complexity of human relationships. They change the pace, raise and lower tension and use different vocal registers to achieve their intended effects. Aspects of citizenship, including rights and responsibilities, are very well taught. In Year 10, students use a wide range of drama techniques, including levels and freeze frame, so that they consciously manipulate the audience's reactions. Some of the pieces produced have an emotional intensity to which the rest of the class responds appreciatively and thoughtfully. For example, students, depicting a conflict between a birth and an adoptive mother, do so with complete conviction, but also address the audience in an anti-naturalistic way to increase impact. Students do no writing in Years 7 – 9, and so do not consolidate and extend the ability that they show in lessons to plan, to evaluate and to reflect on moral and social issues. Teachers assess students' work throughout the lessons, so that students know what they need to do to improve. Students sometimes give less detailed and incisive evaluative comments in whole- class discussions than they do within their performing groups.

### *Leadership and management*

113. Leadership and management are very good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The teacher leading drama has a clear vision and is firmly focused on raising attainment and achievement. Assessment procedures and practices are very effective. Drama is now taught in Year 10, so that it will be a GCSE subject from next year.

## Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers in the subject have very high expectations.
- Lessons are very well planned.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very good;
- The accommodation available for music is satisfactory overall, but standards in the practical aspects of the subject are hindered by a lack of practice rooms.

### Commentary

	<b>Years 7 - 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Examination results

114. Year 9 teachers' assessments were well above the national average in 2004. GCSE examination results were also well above average, with all but two students achieving an A\* – C grade.

### Standards and achievement

115. Students start Year 7 with average musical ability. Because of a very well planned curriculum and very good teaching, they make very good progress through Years 7, 8 and 9, achieving very well so that, by the end of Year 9, standards in music are well above average. Due to the very experienced and skilled teaching, students in Years 10 and 11 continue to make very good progress and achieve very well. Standards of work seen across Years 7 – 11 are well above average. In general, students have very good aural discrimination and are able to produce very sophisticated compositional work. By the age of 14, they are further developing their listening skills and are composing music in a variety of styles and genres, including minimalism, jazz and variation. They can notate these using computer software. Students with special educational needs make very good progress, as do lower attainers, because they are very well catered for through extra support from the teachers. The very few minority ethnic students, and those with English as an additional language, achieve as well as their peers.

### Teaching and learning

116. Teaching and learning are very good in all years, with examples of excellent teaching in Year 8. Teachers have very high expectations and lessons move at a fast pace,

containing a range of linked activities which motivate the students, maintain their interests and assure very good behaviour. There is good assessment of practical tasks and students are encouraged to assess their own and each other's work, using national curriculum and exam criteria, and often advanced musical terminology. The marking of written work, however, does not always help students to know what they are doing well and what they need to do better to improve. It mostly lacks reference to national curriculum levels or examination criteria. Music makes a very good contribution to the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and to the heightening of their literacy skills. The subject encourages positively the use of ICT and provides satisfactory opportunities for students to enhance levels of numeracy.

### *Leadership and management*

117. Leadership and management are very good and, although the subject is taught by two part-time teachers unable to consult on a day-to-day basis, the quality of teaching and learning is monitored and reviewed very efficiently. Schemes of work are imaginative and contain a very good range of activities and musical genres, catering effectively for all students. The exceptionally musically talented students are well catered for through additional work in the classroom and through instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which are accessed by a large number of students. A high proportion receive instrumental tuition from the visiting peripatetic teachers and many others have private lessons outside of school. The quality of instrumental lessons is satisfactory and sometimes good. However, it is a weakness that the music department does not monitor the quality of the instrumental lessons. Resources for learning in the department are satisfactory overall. There are adequate keyboards, and the classroom percussion instruments, although old, are used effectively by the students. There is a good number of computers, available in a separate classroom, that are equipped with sequencing, notating and reference software. The use of these computers is planned effectively in schemes of work. Accommodation is only just satisfactory. There are no small practice rooms allocated near the main teaching room, which means that group practical work is difficult and that visiting instrumental staff are accommodated a distance from the main building, working often in isolation. Students also have to cross a busy main road to attend instrumental lessons. There has been no improvement in this aspect of provision since the last inspection. Nevertheless, the department has made good overall progress in response to all other identified issues.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in the subject is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership is very good and management is good.
- Teaching and learning are very good, leading to above average standards in all aspects of physical education and well above average standards in dance and gymnastics.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are excellent.
- Facilities on the school's site are unsatisfactory.
- Assessment is inconsistent, particularly in Years 7 – 9.

## Commentary

	<b>Years 7- 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

### *Examination results*

118. Teachers' assessments of students' attainment, at age 14 in 2004, were well above average. However, overall standards of work seen in lessons, although above average, do not support these well above average assessments. The recent introduction of more rigorous assessment procedures, including self-assessment in Year 7, is already improving this aspect of the subject's work. There were no GCSE examinations in physical education in 2004.

### *Standards and achievement*

119. Standards of work seen in Years 7 – 9 are above average overall. All students, including those from minority ethnic heritages and those with additional learning needs, achieve very well, particularly given their below average skills on entry. This is because teaching and learning are very good and two and a half hours per week is devoted to physical education.

120. By the age of 14, most can acquire and develop key skills, applying them to suit the activity in a consistent manner. They are able to analyse and comment on performance and suggest ways to improve both for themselves and for others. For example, in a dance lesson, students were able to use a simple motif and create and perform a dance to a high standard. In netball, they show good spatial awareness and effective skills in throwing and catching.

121. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are well above average, particularly in gymnastics. In one lesson, students composed complex sequences, both on the floor and using apparatus, which included movements demonstrating precision, control and fluency. All students, including those from minority ethnic heritages and those with additional learning needs, achieve well across Years 10 and 11, but not as well as the very good teaching and learning would suggest. This is because, currently, they do not receive the government's aspiration of two hours of high quality physical education and sport per week.

### *Teaching and learning*

122. Teaching and learning are very good overall, but there are some excellent teaching and learning in gymnastics and dance. In one lesson, excellent use of a video camera allowed students an opportunity to evaluate and improve performance, resulting in a noticeable improvement in the quality of their work. Talented students are given more challenge in extra-curricular activities than during lessons.

### *Leadership and management*

123. The leadership of the subject is very good. The subject leader has vision and is an excellent role model. She has high expectations of both staff and students. Given the inadequate school facilities, the regular need to travel to a local sports centre to supplement these facilities and the subsequent loss of curriculum time, she plans the subject very well to maximise the achievement of all students, particularly in gymnastics and dance. Management is good, but the use of performance data to check students' progress in Years 7 – 9 is inconsistent. The subject leader recognises this issue and has already improved procedures for the evaluation of students' progress in Year 7.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teaching is very good and results in well above average standards of work in lessons and well above average GCSE examination results.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Students' learning includes strong elements of information and communication technology, work-related learning and engineering.
- Students have sufficient contacts with businesses outside of school.

### **Commentary**

	<b>Years 7 - 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Not applicable	Well above average
Achievement	Not applicable	Very good
Teaching and learning	Not applicable	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### *Examination results*

124. There are no business studies courses in Years 7, 8 and 9. At the end of Year 11 in 2004, standards of attainment in the GCSE course are well above the national average. Over four out of five students gained the higher grades of A\* - C, and all students achieved an A\* - G grade.

### *Standards and achievement*

125. Standards seen during the inspection, in Years 10 and 11, are well above those expected nationally. Students have a strong knowledge and understanding of many aspects that are central to business operations. These include cash flow, sources of finance, costs, and many employment issues. They can express themselves well and, for example, explain the difference between job descriptions and person specifications. The achievement of the students is very good. Those with special educational needs make good progress through the support given to them during the

lessons. Lower and higher attainers also achieve well through the provision made for them in classes. Students from minority ethnic heritages achieve as well as their peers.

### *Teaching and learning*

126. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are very well planned and contain a range of clear learning objectives. These objectives are communicated effectively to students. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and expertise. Consequently, the content of lessons is shared with confidence and flair. Students respond very positively to these innovative learning experiences and are always very well behaved and attentive. The teaching includes the use of business examples that are current in the media. This makes a significant impact on the quality of students' learning. Learning from actual business situations is more limited. Strong demands are made on students in lessons and, as a result, they learn a lot in the time available. Occasionally, some of learning is lost when students have insufficient time to write key information in their notebooks. ICT is used regularly in lessons to support learning. The teaching makes a very good contribution to many aspects of work-related learning, as well as to students' developing knowledge and understanding of engineering processes. There are opportunities to reinforce a good range of students' key numeracy skills. Teachers regularly mark students' work and use assessment tasks to communicate what students can do well and what they need to do to improve further the quality of their work.

### *Leadership and management*

127. Leadership and management are very good. The subject improvement plan highlights appropriately the need to improve contacts with higher education institutions, as well as with local businesses. The department has a range of very good documentation that ensures overall effective systems and practices. Accommodation and resources are very good. Progress since the last inspection has been good, particularly in improvements made in accommodation.

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

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students, across Years 7 – 11, are confident in expressing and justifying opinions and in developing persuasive arguments, as a result of their very good discussions and debating skills. They participate well in the life of the school and develop responsible actions within and beyond school.
- The initial audit, and subsequent mapping of the content of citizenship and PSHE across Years 7 – 11, is good.
- The quality of teaching of the specialist PSHE teacher is good.
- The school's procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of citizenship and PSHE are unsatisfactory.
- The individual students' self-assessment 'passport' does not fully reflect expected end of Year 9 attainments, nor is it sufficiently cross-referenced with other relevant subjects.

## Commentary

	<b>Years 7 - 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable

### *Examination results*

128. No formal tests or examinations were taken by students in 2004.

### *Standards and achievement*

129. Standards of work seen in Years 7 – 11 are above average. By the age of 14, students can justify opinions, listen to and consider the views of others and present an argument to the whole class. Many are able to develop persuasive arguments in small group settings, showing an awareness of the strength of peer group pressure that they may have to counter. By the age of 16, students can thoughtfully discuss global issues such as capital punishment and world poverty, as well as sensitively sharing thoughts on loss and bereavement. Many students show a sophisticated understanding of the complexities of personal relationships. These skills and insights have been developed as a result of their very good discussion and debating skills. Students demonstrate that they are good young citizens via their participation in the life of the school, and the many responsible actions in which they willingly engage, within and beyond school. The achievement of all students across Years 7 - 11, including those with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic heritages, is good.

### *Teaching and learning*

130. In Years 7 – 11, teaching and learning are good. The specialist teacher of PSHE plans her lessons well to stimulate new learning. She ensures a good balance in each lesson between providing students with information, promoting discussion and consequently deepening students' understanding. For the most part, students are fully engaged and work very well together, developing skills in small groups and the whole class to share, consult and justify. Citizenship and PSHE contribute significantly to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all students.

131. Students produce self-assessment statements in their annual reports to parents, based on evidence kept by them in their whole-school progress files. This evidence is validated by personal tutors. In the past, these statements have only covered the content and skills sampled. They have not provided clear judgements on individual students' progress in knowledge, skills and understanding. These assessment procedures are therefore unsatisfactory. The school has already recognised this concern and is making amendments to the citizenship and PSHE 'passport' to reflect more closely the end of Year 9 expected attainment outcomes, cross-referenced with other appropriate subjects and the national expectations for PSHE. This will enable students and tutors to judge progress and attainment more effectively across the three key elements of citizenship.



### *Leadership and management*

132. The leadership and management of citizenship and PSHE are good. A comprehensive audit of learning opportunities across the curriculum has taken place, followed by a whole-school mapping exercise, with each subject agreeing a contribution. Gaps in provision have been identified and these have been covered by specifically developed programmes in Years 7 and 8, focusing on health and political literacy. 'Off-timetable' days have also been identified in Year 10 to ensure coverage of financial capability and further aspects of political literacy. However, there is insufficiently planned monitoring and evaluation of the provision of citizenship and PSHE to ensure that all subjects are delivering agreed learning objectives in lessons, and to ensure that all students are fully benefiting from these experiences. The progress and attainment of each student are not systematically assessed and recorded at the end of each year.

### **WORK-RELATED LEARNING**

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

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

- Many students demonstrate a good breadth of understanding of work-related learning and of the skills, attitudes and qualities that are valued in the workplace.
- Careers education and a number of subjects extend effectively students' understanding of the world of work.
- The school offers some good work-related enrichment activities.
- Work-related learning is led and managed well.

#### **Commentary**

	<b>Years 7 - 9</b>	<b>Years 10 - 11</b>
Standards seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	No direct observations	No direct observations

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable

#### *Examination results*

133. Work-related learning is not formally examined.

#### *Standards and achievement*

134. Overall, standards of work seen are above average and achievement is good. By the age of 16, many students demonstrate a good breadth of understanding of work-related learning. They have developed skills for enterprise and employability through learning opportunities provided by specific subjects and off-timetable days across Years 7 – 11. Careers education and specific topics, in a number of subjects, extend students' understanding of the world of work. Students are well prepared for their two-

week work experience and are effectively de-briefed afterwards to ensure good learning and understanding. Many students demonstrate many of the skills, attitudes and qualities that are valued in the workplace. GCSE mathematics, science and technology courses support and promote effectively work-related learning. The school achieved all of the 2004 GCSE targets related to its engineering status in mathematics, targets for average points score in technology and co-ordinated science, and for the number of students achieving A\* and A grades in co-ordinated science, chemistry, physics and food technology.

### *Teaching and learning*

135. No judgements can be made on teaching and learning as no direct teaching and learning were observed. Nonetheless, effective careers education lessons are provided through off-timetable days in Years 7 and 8 and a specific programme in Year 9. 'Making it Real' and the 'Real Game' are used as a basis for these experiences. In Years 10 and 11, comprehensive briefing sessions are organised prior to a two-week work experience in Year 11, followed by effective de-briefing sessions. There are some good enrichment activities, including science, young engineers and young enterprise clubs. Students also organise a Fair Trade 'shop' and the school's own branch of a major high street bank.

### *Leadership and management*

136. Work-related learning is led and managed well by the school's *Connexions* manager, who is also the sixth form student support manager. She keeps well up-to-date with current initiatives and legislation, managing the school's own part-time careers teacher, a qualified careers officer, responsible for developing careers education and guidance across the school, and organising work experience in Year 11. The school has a curriculum policy for work-related learning that meets statutory requirements, providing a coherent programme for all students in Year 10 and 11. The policy is well understood by all staff. The school has effective partnerships with local employers for the benefit of students. It is also well supported by personal advisers from the *Connexions* Service who are able to offer additional specialised support to students. Specialist agencies are also available to work with girls to support applications for Oxbridge and medical schools.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 10 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 school has an inclusive entry policy, requiring a minimum of five GCSE grades A\*-C.

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
Archaeology	5	100	85	100	31	56.0	33.0
Art and design	22	100	81	86	23	52.7	29.6
Biology	23	87	70	52	12	41.3	21.8
Business studies	14	100	82	29	20	40.0	29.1
Chemistry	32	100	74	66	13	48.8	24.1
Critical thinking	38	74	81	16	23	26.3	30.0
English language	32	100	92	44	24	44.1	33.7
English literature	31	100	91	71	22	51.9	32.5
French	9	100	82	33	19	43.3	28.7
Further mathematics	Not certified until Year 13						
General studies	92	96	78	47	19	42.4	27.3
Geography	31	100	82	81	26	54.5	30.8
German	4	100	83	75	19	50.0	29.2
History	35	97	87	69	24	48.3	31.8
Mathematics	Not certified until Year 13						
Music	5	100	86	40	20	44.0	29.9
Physical education	2	100	82	100	19	60.0	27.8
Physics	14	100	72	43	16	48.6	24.2
Politics	16	100	82	69	23	48.8	29.9
Product design	8	100	81	75	19	55.0	28.3
Psychology	33	88	73	46	18	38.8	25.4
Theatre studies	14	100	92	79	27	52.1	34.6

### *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	9	100	98	100	48.0	111.1	85.9
Biology	32	100	97	53.1	40.6	90.6	79.6
Business studies	16	100	99	68.8	38.4	100.0	81.2
Chemistry	28	100	98	67.9	49.6	102.9	85.5

English language	32	100	99	65.6	35.0	96.9	80.2
English literature	20	100	99	95.0	44.8	115.0	85.4
French	9	100	99	44.4	52.9	88.9	88.7
Further mathematics	2	100	97	50.0	69.8	100.0	97.8
General studies	77	100	95	41.6	30.3	84.7	72.7
Geography	19	100	99	84.2	46.2	109.5	85.0
German	6	100	99	50.0	49.4	80.0	86.2
History	25	100	99	72.0	45.5	96.8	85.0
Mathematics	10	100	96	80.0	55.0	108.0	88.1
Music	5	100	99	60.0	40.0	96.0	81.3
Physics	18	100	97	83.3	44.9	103.3	82.2
Politics	12	100	98	100.0	53.7	111.7	88.4
Product design	11	100	98	72.7	34.4	101.8	77.4
Psychology	24	91.7	97	41.7	40.7	80.0	80.6
Theatre studies	9	100	100	77.8	42.5	104.4	84.9

### ***Level 2 vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
<b>NONE</b>							

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' command of the subject is excellent.
- Very good teaching ensures that learning and achievement are very good and that students become independent thinkers and learners.
- Teachers provide sustained feedback which supports and challenges students of all abilities.

#### Commentary

	<b>Years 12 - 13</b>
Standards seen	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

#### *Examination results*

137. Standards in the 2004 GCE English Language AS and A2 examinations were well above the national average. In English Literature, they were very high in comparison with the national average. These high standards have been sustained in recent years.

#### *Standards and achievement*

138. Standards of work seen are well above average for all students, including gifted students, higher and relatively lower attaining students, those from ethnic minorities and those with special educational needs. All students achieve very well. They discuss complex issues with sensitivity and sophistication. They read analytically, with a keen attention to inference and ambiguity. Their writing is very good, often excellent.

#### *Teaching and learning*

139. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers know and love their subject. They are expert at eliciting very sophisticated ideas from students by allowing every student who wishes to speak to do so. They invite students to respond to and to question each other, so that they create an atmosphere which is both highly supportive and challenging. The discussions are well paced and exploratory. For example, students suggest that Desdemona is denied a dignified death in "Othello" because she dies in ignorance of the truth. In a discussion on Black English, students speak with good humour about differences in their own dialects and accents and wrestle with new concepts about language in a focused and analytical way. Most students make notes during the discussions, recording points made both by the teacher and other students. These notes serve them well in the very challenging writing tasks that teachers set.

Teachers set targets and track students' progress very well. They offer detailed advice to each student, while emphasising the need for independence and originality. Students transfer the enthusiasm, which the lessons have generated, into clear, engaging writing which shows that they have continued to think and to research after the lessons have ended.

### *Leadership and management*

140. Leadership and management are very good. The director of studies shows determination in her pursuit of ever higher standards and is supported very well by all members of the team. Improvement since the last inspection is good. In particular, examination results have improved.

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

141. Many students have very good oral and literacy skills which develop very effectively in the sixth form. Specialised vocabulary is used confidently and to good effect in many subjects. Many students can use correct technical language in context. Students discuss maturely in pairs and small groups and can present very well thought-out reports of their discussions. They answer questions readily, supporting their views with well-researched evidence. They are confident to disagree with each other and their teacher. Students read prose and drama texts fluently, with very good awareness of character and inference. They are able to concentrate on their work independently and make very effective use of the library and designated ICT suites. The majority show a very good awareness of the need for formal language in academic reports. Essay skills are well developed in many subjects.

### **Modern foreign languages**

The school provides AS and A2 level courses in French and German, and optional courses outside school time in Russian and Spanish. Both French and German were inspected.

Provision for modern languages is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCE AS level results in 2004 were very high in German and well above average in French.
- GCE A2 level results in 2004 in French were below average but standards are improving and some students now attain very high outcomes.
- All students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- There is insufficient use of televised and other up-to-date news media in languages lessons.

### **Commentary**

	<b>Years 12 - 13</b>
Standards seen	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### *Examination results*

142. After A2 level results in French, which were well above average in 2003, there was a sharp drop in results in 2004, when they were below the national average. All students entered achieved a grade, but less than half were awarded grades A or B. In German, results in 2004 were in line with the national average. GCE AS level results in 2004 were very high in German and well above average in French.



### *Standards and achievement*

143. Standards of work seen are above average and are improving, especially from Year 12. In Year 13, both in French and in German, students show good achievement relative to their previous attainment, and standards are average or slightly above. In Year 12, in both languages, there is a completely different picture. Standards are above average or well above average and students' achievement is very good. The standards reached by some students in French are outstanding. Students are committed and respond well to the high demands of their teachers.

### *Teaching and learning*

144. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are at least good in both French and German, and sometimes very good. Languages are taught by well-qualified and experienced staff. Relationships are very mature and positive, and this contributes well to students' achievement. In all lessons, teachers have very high expectations of their students and set them work of an extremely challenging nature, making effective use of extracts from the foreign press and recordings of authentic voices in the target language. They bring their expertise and understanding to bear on topics of contemporary concern which shed light on the lives and experiences of students' counterparts in the foreign country. Occasionally, the sixth form lesson can become slightly static, and teachers do not make sufficient use of current TV and radio broadcasts to promote discussion based on what is happening in France and Germany today.

### *Leadership and management*

145. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision of where the faculty is going and what it wishes to achieve. Plans are in place to support, where appropriate, the school's specialist status. Schemes of work are well planned. They are closely allied to the requirements of the A level examinations and to promoting high levels of attainment from the students. There is a shared determination to drive up standards.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There has been a one hundred per cent pass rate at advanced level in recent years.
- Teaching is very good and provides clear development of new ideas.
- Students' attitudes to mathematics are excellent and support their learning very well.
- Insufficient use is made of targets based on national criteria, limiting teachers' ability to assess students' progress accurately.

### **Commentary**

	<b>Years 12 - 13</b>
Standards seen	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### *Examination results*

146. Results at GCE A2 level have been well above the national average over recent years and all students have been successful. Numbers entered for examinations fell between 2002 and 2004, due to timetable arrangements in which mathematics clashed with other popular subjects. However, standards have remained similar. All students entered for examinations at the end of Year 12 gained AS level grades. Most students continue to study mathematics in Year 13.

### *Standards and achievement*

147. The timetable conflicts have now been resolved and all those wishing to study the subject may do so, resulting in a significant rise in the number of students following mathematics courses. Standards seen in Year 12 lessons are above those expected nationally for AS level mathematics courses. Appropriate entry requirements ensure that all students are able to benefit from their courses. Year 13 standards are well above national expectations and achievement across both years is very good. Students apply themselves well to their studies and demonstrate confidence and understanding of mathematical process. They use high-level algebra with confidence, which supports learning very well in other areas of study. Students' files are of very high quality, reflecting their excellent application and attitudes to the subject. In lessons, they focus closely on their work and show good understanding of mathematical concepts and method. This is especially true in further mathematics lessons in which, for example, students made light work of developing new methods for solving differential equations. There is no difference in the achievement of students from different social and ethnic backgrounds.

### *Teaching and learning*

148. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and experience provide very challenging lessons and clear development of new ideas and methods. This enables very good learning as teachers take every opportunity to link new ideas to those already understood by students. ICT is well used as a teaching tool to enhance students' understanding. Where teaching was excellent, open discourse with the students led them to develop new methods as a natural consequence of logical reasoning, resulting in very clear understanding by students. Teachers know their students well and provide ongoing information on how they can improve

### *Leadership and management*

149. Leadership is very good. The director of studies has ensured that very good learning opportunities and appropriate courses are provided for students. She stands as an excellent role model for students to emulate. Teachers are well qualified to deliver the courses and work well as a team to support students' learning. Management of the department is good. Schemes of work are well delivered and there are good assessment procedures. However, the use of target grades and regular measurement of students' progress against these grades are not in place. The comparison of students' standards, against the average of the year group, does not give a sufficient measure of students' progress against national standards. It is therefore difficult for students to judge their progress. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

150. Students' mathematical skills are well above average and support their studies in other subjects well. Very good skills are evident in business studies lessons where students work very confidently with economic data. Science teachers use and develop students' skills well, for example, when investigating the engineering problems encountered in building railway embankments. In art lessons, students use their knowledge of tessellation and scale drawing to enhance their work. There are opportunities for re-sitting GCSE examinations, which are arranged on an individual basis.

## SCIENCE

151. The focus of the inspection was physics. Lessons in both biology and chemistry were also sampled. In chemistry, standards at GCE AS and A2 levels have been consistently well above the national average in recent years because of very good teaching. Standards in biology, although still well above the national average, are not quite as high as those in chemistry. Biology tends to attract slightly lower-calibre students who wrongly perceive the subject to be the easiest of the three sciences. Sampling of the teaching of chemistry and biology shows several strengths, notably strong subject knowledge and very good preparation. Teaching in biology is challenging and knowledge and understanding are also strong. There are very effective explanations, demonstrations and use of questioning in both subjects.

### Physics

The provision in physics is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average at both AS and A level.
- Very good teaching leads to very good achievement by excellent students.
- The increasing popularity of the subject is resulting in high entry patterns.
- The freestanding mathematics course is not matched effectively to the needs of non-mathematics students and there are too few sensors and interfaces available for students for data logging purposes.

### Commentary

	<b>Years 12 - 13</b>
Standards seen	Well above
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

### Examination results

152. Students' average points score and the proportion achieving the highest grades A and B at GCE A2 Level have been well above the national average for the last three years. All students have achieved a pass grade in the last three years. Similarly, results for

Year 12 students who took the AS course have been well above the national average for the last three years.

### *Standards and achievement*

153. Standards of work seen are well above average and all students achieve very well. The main reasons for this are the very good teaching, excellent attitudes of the students, and the solid foundation obtained by the students at GCSE, both in physics and mathematics.

### *Teaching and learning*

154. Underpinning the very good teaching are the teachers' excellent subject knowledge and understanding. Teachers ask challenging questions which stimulate high-level discussions with very able students. In a Year 13 lesson, about forces arising during particle exchange, a university tutorial atmosphere was created. Students displayed their wider reading on the topic. It is this type of lesson which enables students to achieve so very well. Year 12 students, when presented with open-ended investigations, displayed well above expected laboratory skills. Initially, they found it quite difficult to get started, but with the minimum of prompting, all students soon devised a procedure and began to collect data. By the end of the next lesson, students had analysed their data and presented their findings to the group. This example provides clear evidence that the students' work is well above average. Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities to capture their students' interests. These make an important contribution to learning. Some of the Year 12 students have started an engineering project about slippage on a railway embankment. They have made worthwhile contacts with an engineering company and with Newcastle University. The impetus of specialist engineering status is beginning to bring about real rewards for these students. Another consequence of engineering status is additional money, which was used recently for travel to the International Young Physicists Tournament. The department was thus able to provide Year 13 gifted and talented students with the opportunity to compete nationally. These students performed very well, coming second in this competition.

### *Leadership and management*

155. The subject leader has very good leadership and management skills. She works closely with her colleagues so that the courses are well planned and the examination board's requirements are met. There is a free-standing mathematics course for students who do not take their mathematics beyond GCSE. Presently this course does not meet the needs of those students taking physics and chemistry. Plans for next year should resolve this problem. The department has some sensors, but there are insufficient interfaces for students to do data logging, other than by rotation. A very efficient technician team supports the work of the department. Since the last inspection, considerable progress has made in the provision for ICT. There is now an interactive whiteboard, corresponding software, and a class set of laptops. Standards have improved from above the national average to well above the national average.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

156. There are no formal courses in the sixth form in this subject.

## Information and communication technology across the sixth form curriculum

157. The school does not formally monitor and evaluate what is and is not happening in the sixth form. Nevertheless, students in many areas, particularly mathematics, science, design and technology, geography and art and design, make good use of ICT as a tool for improving the quality of their learning. Students studying English use the Internet very effectively for research purposes. Students use assiduously the dedicated suite of computers for the sixth form, those around the school and in the library, chiefly for the purposes of word-processing, research and data analysis.

## HUMANITIES

The inspection focus was on geography.

### Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching stimulates students and promotes good progress.
- Students' very good attitudes to their work support their learning and lead to above average standards.
- The well developed philosophy of the subject ensures the personal, as well as the academic, development of students.

### Commentary

	<b>Years 12 - 13</b>
Standards seen	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

### *Examination results*

158. Results in 2004 GCE AS examinations, at the end of Year 12, were very high, and well above average in the A2 Year 13 examinations. The proportion of students gaining A or B grades is high and continues to rise.

### *Standards and achievement*

159. Standards of work seen by all students are above average and achievement is very good.

160. Students' attitudes to learning are very good and the high quality outcomes seen in fieldwork folders, for example, are evidence of the pride and care that they take in their work. Assessment and guidance for exam preparation are very good. Students

set themselves high standards and thrive on the support and challenge of their teachers and peers, who both play a significant role in evaluating their progress.

### *Teaching and learning*

161. Teaching and learning are very good. Relationships are very good, often exceptional. Teachers thrive on the positive feedback from their students, who clearly appreciate their commitment, expert knowledge and their obvious passion for the subject. Thorough teaching preparation includes the regular updating of lessons through current world events. This enables most students to quickly engage in debate and, subsequently, bring more traditional research to the table. In one high quality lesson, students presented the results of their research into tectonic activity. The research and the knowledge shared were detailed, enabling the whole group to achieve well. The quality of the presentation, using an ICT presenter, was very good and fellow students were spontaneous in their appreciation of each other's work. Where lessons are not to this very good standard, opportunities are missed to make learning more efficient. For example, in one lesson additional time taken to devise agreed evaluation criteria for a piece of persuasive writing, could have been captured from the initial tentative responses, made by students, in unsupported activity.

### *Leadership and management*

162. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader sets a clear vision which permeates the work of the department. There is a very strong team of teachers. Performance is analysed and actions are taken to strengthen systems or elements of teaching and learning, identified as areas for development. In this way, continuous improvement is well managed. Recent staff changes have been managed well so that the quality of provision has been maintained, at a time when the high standards might have been vulnerable. Resources are scarce, but the curriculum is planned so that environmental and current events can both be utilised effectively to enhance learning.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Product design**

Provision for product design is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in GCE AS and A2 examinations are very high and well above average, respectively.
- There is very good leadership and management that leads to very good teaching and learning, and good achievement overall.
- Students learn key concepts quickly and apply them very effectively in developing their design solutions.
- Students work very well together and support each other freely.
- Students possess very good communication skills and use ICT modelling software to very good effect.
- Materials available for students' use are of good quality but narrow in breadth.

### **Commentary**

	<b>Years 12 - 13</b>
Standards seen	Well above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### *Examination results*

163. Examination results in the GCE A2 level examination in 2004 were well above average and significantly above those of previous years. 2004 results in the AS level examinations were very high.

### *Standards and achievement*

164. The standards of work seen are well above average. All students achieve well based on outcomes at the end of Year 11. This is due to very effective teaching, a high degree of challenge brought about through peer and staff discussion, and a personal desire on the students' part to design and make high quality products.

### *Teaching and learning*

165. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have an excellent command of the subject and clearly know the students well. Relationships, amongst students and staff, are very good and used exceptionally well to motivate and challenge all learners. Each student has a mentor who is available for personal support when necessary. Discussion, demonstration and group interaction are used very effectively. During lessons students display confidence and independence as a result of high quality support from teachers and consistent, rigorous attention to detail. Students listen carefully to both their peers and teachers and consequently show improvement in skills and the techniques necessary to make high quality products. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, one student, after identifying problems in the manufacture of an end panel, entered discussion with her friend and after considering various solutions decided to redefine the specification and to re-cut the panel. Good quality resources are readily available, allowing students the opportunity to select from a narrow but modern range of materials. Coursework portfolios show a very good range of communication skills being developed, especially in the use of ICT modelling software. Students show purposeful endeavour and are prompt to their lessons. They support each other effectively and, when working in groups, talk and listen to each other in a mature way. They are willing to challenge each other respectfully and to ask questions when unsure of their ground. They clearly enjoy their work and are becoming increasingly creative in their response to design problems. All students display confidence when offering their ideas in group work and prefer investigative approaches to learning, rather than a teacher directed approach.

### *Leadership and management*

166. Leadership and management are very good. Although the curriculum offered is narrow, product design is now studied at both GCE AS and A2 levels. The subject leader has plans to widen this provision with an engineering qualification in September



2005. There is no complacency in the approach of this team, but a total commitment to raising further overall levels of achievement and to using the specialist engineering status to improve standards of teaching and learning, both within and beyond the school. The progress that all students make is carefully assessed and mentors quickly support individual students, if difficulties arise. Technical support is used very well to support teaching and learning.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design, music and theatre studies.

### Art and design

Provision in art is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent teaching and learning, resulting in excellent achievement and excellent standards of work.
- Students' outstanding attitudes to art and design.
- The very strong connections that students make between art and other subjects and the contemporary and historical world.

### Commentary

	<b>Years 12 - 13</b>
Standards seen	Very high
Achievement	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Excellent

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

### Examination results

167. In the 2004 GCE AS level examinations, results improved and were very high. Students performed better in art than in their other subjects. In the 2004 GCE A2 level examination, almost all students achieved A or B grades. This was a continuation of well above average attainment.

### Standards and achievement

168. Standards of work seen are excellent. These build on the very high standards achieved by the end of Year 11. Current work demonstrates rapid progress, leading to very high standards at AS level by the end of Year 12. Numbers opting for art are growing and the course attracts students from other schools. The small number of minority ethnic students achieves equally high standards of work. The courses meet students' needs with the result that all students continue on to the A2 level course.

### Example of outstanding practice

**An example of outstanding practice in art is the exceptionally high standards displayed by students in their life drawings and paintings. In after-school sessions at a local college, students learn to look at, and respond to, the male and female figure in line, tone and colour. Influenced by the works of Lucian Freud, they show command of their craft, reaching an exceptionally mature and sophisticated level.**

169. Students are successful in making connections between art and their other subjects. Following a visit to Tate Modern, research skills learnt in psychology are successfully employed to analyse views of contemporary art held by the public. Knowledge gained in the study of music, and knowledge of skeletal forms gained in biology, is used very creatively to enrich artwork. By the end of Year 13, the majority of students demonstrate an understanding and ability that would not be out of place on an art foundation course or many art degree courses. Their folders are packed with skill, flair and brio in abundance. For two years running, individual students have been recognised as being amongst the five top-performing art students nationally. All this demonstrates excellent achievement.

#### *Teaching and learning*

170. There is excellent inspirational teaching and this leads to excellent learning. Teachers have a very good range of knowledge in different specialisms and are able to direct students to the work of artists that will further their own particular interests and needs. They possess very good craft skills, particularly in painting and printmaking, and are able to develop students' craft skills to a very high standard by group and individual demonstration. Students talk fluently and write confidently about art. They have a very good knowledge of art and express their personal opinions and judgements confidently. Through regular tutorial sessions, students are kept informed of how well they are doing and what they need to address in order to improve. Students show social responsibility by voluntarily devising, managing and delivering lunchtime art clubs that widen the experiences available for Year 7 - 9 pupils. They are able to use their art to express their social and moral concerns. Students confidently use studio computers to research art, or as an additional creative tool. They expand their knowledge of both historical and contemporary art by visits to local artists and national art galleries.

#### *Leadership and management*

171. The subject co-ordinator has clear vision and has established a culture of learning in which students blossom as independent creative artists. She observes her part-time teaching team, as part of performance management arrangements, and this leads to the sharing of good practice across the team. Links with a local college have been established and an art history group, both of which broaden students' experiences. The limited amount of technical support-time available is managed efficiently. Students are provided with their own designated studio and this makes a very positive contribution to the development of practical work in private study time.

## **Music**

Provision for music is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent teaching and learning that leads to excellent achievement by all students.
- Well above average GCE AS and A2 examination results.
- Students' excellent attitudes to musical analysis and performance.
- Students' very good instrumental and vocal skills.

## Commentary

	Years 12 - 13
Standards seen	Very high
Achievement	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Excellent

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

### *Examination results*

172. GCE A level results have been well above average for the last three years, with all students gaining a grade A to C in 2004. All GCE AS students achieved a grade A – C in 2002 and in 2003, with two-thirds achieving these high grades in 2004. This is well above average.

### *Standards and achievement*

173. The standards of work seen are very high. The achievement of all students in lessons is excellent. Students are able to analyse music very well, for example a Bach Sarabande and Gigue, with a highly sophisticated level of understanding of harmonic structure. Students' instrumental and vocal skills are very good and they are all able to perform with assurance and musical maturity.

### *Teaching and learning*

174. Teaching and learning are excellent in lessons. The teacher has very high expectations and students are challenged to think about and produce work of a very high standard. Lessons move at a fast pace and contain a very good mix of activities to stretch and develop the students' musical knowledge and skills.

### *Leadership and management*

175. Leadership and management in the sixth form are excellent. The curriculum is very well constructed and resources, including ICT, are very well managed to enable all students to achieve very high standards.

## Theatre studies

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching promotes the sophisticated presentation of complex ideas.
- Students' excellent attitudes contribute to their very good achievement.
- Students develop very good technical skills.

## Commentary

	<b>Years 12 - 13</b>
Standards seen	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### *Examination results*

176. Results in the 2004 GCE AS level examination were very high in comparison with the national average. Results in the 2004 GCE A2 examination were well above the national average.

### *Standards and achievement*

177. Standards of work seen are well above average for all students, including those from minority ethnic heritages. Achievement is very good for all students because they work on highly sophisticated texts and use their very good understanding of drama techniques and effects to present complex ideas in striking and emotive ways. They read texts analytically, extracting the meaning and significance, working out ways in which to convey large themes and individual nuances. They plan, evaluate and research the work of authors, directors and stage technicians. They convey their learning in writing which is clear, engaged and often original.

### *Teaching and learning*

178. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers give rigorous assessment and advice to individuals and groups. Students' response is excellent. They work very well both in and beyond lessons, showing that they are independent learners. They produce moving performances that engage the intellect and the emotions. Consequently, the subject makes a very good contribution to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. For example, students bring into a play, based on Kafka's "The Trial", parallels with contemporary issues about torture and justice. Technology is used very well to enhance the quality of performance, where students plan and construct very effective sequences of lighting, sound and images.

### *Leadership and management*

179. Leadership and management are very good. The teacher, leading theatre studies, has a clear vision and is firmly focused on raising attainment and achievement. The three teachers of theatre studies work very effectively as a team. The accommodation and resources available to the subject make a very good contribution to raising standards. Overall, there has been good progress since the last inspection.

## BUSINESS

### Business studies

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Students' learning includes knowledge and understanding of many broader issues such as information technology, work-related learning and some aspects of engineering.
- The subject leader coordinates very effectively a Young Enterprise scheme.
- Students have insufficient contacts with businesses outside of school.

### Commentary

	<b>Years 12 - 13</b>
Standards seen	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### *Examination results*

180. In 2004, the standards of attainment in the GCE AS course were well above average. Two-thirds of students gained the higher grades of A – C and all gained grades A - E. Similarly, in the GCE A2 examination, standards of attainment were well above average. All students gained an A - C grade.

### *Standards and achievement*

181. The general standards of work seen during the inspection are above the standards expected nationally, and often higher. All students achieve very well. They can make intelligent reference to a range of issues that are central to the business environment. These include aspects of governmental involvement in businesses, such as the effects of interest rate changes. Students know and understand how businesses have to take into consideration the things that influence customer demand. Their writing skills are strong. They can use ICT in an effective way.

### *Teaching and learning*

182. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. There is strong subject expertise that ensures topics and themes are put across clearly. The teacher engages the students' interests by relating the subject matter to the every day events that occur in the business world. Lessons have a fast pace and the levels set for learning are high. Consequently, students learn a lot in the time available. Opportunities for students to

visit businesses outside of school are limited. Occasionally, some of the learning is lost when pupils are not always able to get all of the information into their books for future reference. The teaching makes a good input into the work-related learning programme and in understanding various aspects of engineering. Lessons also help the students to reinforce key numeracy skills. Effective marking and assessment policies are in place.

### *Leadership and management*

183. Leadership and management are very good. The department has a good improvement plan and a range of detailed documentation. The subject leader recognises that, at present, there are insufficiently planned contacts with institutions of higher education and businesses. Accommodation and resources are very good and support very well students' achievement. Progress since the last inspection has been good, particularly in the improvements made to the accommodation.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

184. This was not a focus for the inspection. The personal, social and health education arrangements were explored and are good. They offer good opportunities for enhancing students' moral and social development. Students feel positive about this provision. Psychology was also sampled. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Students achieved well in the lesson seen. The teacher's knowledge and command of the subject enable lessons to be well planned and to include a range of activities to promote students' learning and achievement. Relationships with students are very good and students are confident to respond to questioning, both to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, and to seek clarification in areas where they are uncertain. Students enjoy psychology.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>2</b>
Students' achievement	2	2
<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>2</b>
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	1	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	1
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well students learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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