

INSPECTION REPORT

SUTTON COLDFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103521

Headteacher: Mrs K. Harrison

Lead inspector: Mr D. Driscoll

Dates of inspection: 20th – 23rd September 2004

Inspection number: 268491

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

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Terms used in this report

*Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools **after** Year 6. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Students in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).*

Inspectors judge the standards reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' achievements reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational value added over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (selective)
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 18
Gender of students:	Female
Number on roll:	1004
School address:	Jockey Road Sutton Coldfield West Midlands
Postcode:	B73 5PT
Telephone number:	0121 354 1479
Fax number:	0121 354 9418
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr N. Mackay
Date of previous inspection:	8 th February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sutton Coldfield Grammar School for Girls is a selective school for girls, that is similar in size to most other secondary schools. The school is very popular with parents; there are many more parents wishing to send their children to the school than there are places available. The majority of students are white British, with a sizeable group of Asian-Indian students and small numbers from each of a very large number of different minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students whose mother tongue is not English is high, but all are fluent in English.

Standards of attainment on entry to the school and sixth form are very high; students must pass an entry examination in order to be accepted into the main school. The proportion of students with special educational needs is well below average; no student has a statement of special educational need. Most students are on the register because they have physical or social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Students come from a very wide area, taking in much of Birmingham and beyond; socio-economic circumstances are well above average. The school has been a Beacon School and became a specialist science college in September 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11933	D. Driscoll	Lead inspector	
13395	J. Illingworth	Lay inspector	
33139	M. Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics
19596	B. Treacy	Team inspector	English
4145	C. Harrison	Team inspector	Science
10297	D. Cox	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT); design and technology in the sixth form
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design
30973	G. Hancock	Team inspector	Design and technology
31705	J. Mason	Team inspector	Music
15462	C. Blakemore	Team inspector	History
20124	J. Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
22411	A. Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics in the sixth form
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education (PE)
30427	F. Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education (RE)
2597	C. Jackson	Team inspector	Business studies
11720	P. Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs; theatre studies in the sixth form.
17278	B. Abrams	Team inspector	Chemistry and physics in the sixth form
19026	B. Downes	Team inspector	Geography
33158	G. Jagger	Team inspector	English in the sixth form
22590	R. Castle	Team inspector	Citizenship; work-related learning (WRL).

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school that provides a **very good** quality of education and **excellent** value for money, given the below average funding it receives.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are very high, reflecting students' very good achievement as a result of very good teaching.
- Standards are improving rapidly as a result of very good leadership.
- The students' very good attitudes raise their levels of achievement.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is very good in the main school.
- Form time is not used well enough.
- The sixth form curriculum is unsatisfactory because there is neither core RE nor opportunities for recreational sporting activities during lesson time.

Progress since the last inspection has been **very good**. Standards are higher and achievement is better as a result of significantly improved teaching. All of the weaknesses identified in the previous report have been addressed successfully and many are now strengths of the school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement for all groups of students is **very good**. Standards are **very high** by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. In all years, students perform much better than expected given their levels of prior attainment. Achievement is at least good in all subjects. Achievement in the sixth form is very good; standards are very high. Achievement is very good in all subjects inspected in the sixth form except design and technology, where it is satisfactory.

Students' personal qualities and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **very good**. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Attendance is well above average and punctuality is good. Students in the sixth form have very good attitudes and attendance; their behaviour is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **very good** quality of education. Teaching and learning are **very good**. Teaching is very good in all years, including the sixth form. Teaching is at least good in all subjects, except design and technology in the sixth form where it is satisfactory. In many subjects teaching is very good.

The curriculum is good in the main school. There is a very good range of extra clubs and activities. Provision for special educational needs students is very good. The curriculum is unsatisfactory in the sixth form as no core RE is taught for all students and there are no opportunities to take part in sport during lesson time. The

quality of guidance and support for students is good; it is very good in the sixth form. The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school by the headteacher and other senior staff is **very good**; management and governance are **good**. Teamwork in the school is particularly strong and the school achieves a high degree of consistency in its work.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those students and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting. Parents are very happy with the education their children receive, especially the high expectations of the school regarding students' learning and behaviour. They are less satisfied with the information they receive about students' progress. Students, too, are very happy with the education they receive, but they would like to learn more about each other's cultures.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

This is a school with no major weaknesses of any kind and little of its work falls below a good standard. The most important things the school needs to do to improve still further are:

- Ensure that better use is made of form time.
- Ensure that relatively lower attainers are not 'left behind' in some lessons.
- Extend the very good review systems in the sixth form to the main school, in order to make even the good teaching better.

In the sixth form:

- Improve the quality of teaching in design and technology to that seen in other subjects.
- Provide more opportunities for students to take part in sporting activities.

To meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship.
- Provide RE in Years 11 to 13.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides a **very good** education and its cost-effectiveness is excellent. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Very good leadership is ensuring rapid improvement and a high degree of consistency in all aspects of its work.
- Teaching is very good in all subjects, except design and technology where it is satisfactory.
- Students receive no core RE or games lessons.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English literature is very good . Teaching and learning are very good so students achieve very well. Provision in French is very good . Students are achieving very well because teachers have such a good command of the subject.
Mathematics	Very good . The very good teaching leads to highly motivated and hard-working students.
Science	Provision in chemistry is very good . Teachers are very knowledgeable and plan lessons carefully to include a good variety of interesting and challenging activities. Provision in physics is very good . Teachers are very knowledgeable and plan lessons that include a variety of activities that motivates students.
Humanities	Provision in history is very good . Very good teaching, combined with students' very good attitudes, lead to very good achievement.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in design and technology is satisfactory . Teaching is satisfactory; teachers do not have the experience of teaching to the highest levels.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in theatre studies is very good . Students learn very well because of the very good teaching and excellent relationships.
Business	Provision in business studies is very good . Teachers use their knowledge of individual students very well to ensure all are achieving very well.

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

The quality of advice and guidance is very good, with educational support being a particular strength.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership of the sixth form is **very good**; its management and governance are **good**. The sixth form has made very good progress in recent years and benefits from the same degree of consistency in its work as takes place in the main school.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students in the sixth form are very happy at the school and have no real complaints about their own education. They are particularly appreciative of the time and effort provided by their teachers.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Main school

Standards are very high in all years, reflecting students' very good achievement. Standards in the basic skills of language, literacy, mathematics and ICT are very high.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are doing much better than expected by the end of Year 9, in comparison to their standards on joining the school.
- Students achieved very well in their GCSE examinations in 2004 in comparison to their results when they were in Year 9.
- The school ensures that all groups of students can achieve equally well.
- Standards, and results, are rising quickly.

Commentary

1. Students arrive at the school with standards that are very high; however, the school still manages to improve their standards at a much better rate than is usually seen, so by the end of Year 9 students have achieved very well. Results from the national tests in 2003 were very high, and in the top five per cent nationally in English, mathematics and science. Results were similar in 2004, although there was a significant improvement in English. Results have been rising at a faster rate than the national average.
2. Students achieve very well in almost all their subjects, and their achievement is good in French, music and RE.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	42.3 (44.3)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	47.8 (47.1)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	43.2 (43.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 150 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Students continue to do much better than expected in Years 10 and 11. Results in the GCSE examinations were very high in 2003, placing the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. These results were better than would usually be expected from the students' results in the national tests at the end of Year 9. Results in 2004 were much higher, as students studied for more GCSE examinations than in previous years; these results represent very good achievement given the students' standards when they were in Year 9. Results have been improving at a faster rate than that seen nationally. Students achieve very well in almost all their subjects, and achieve well in English, ICT, PE and RE.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	99 (100)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	53.8 (55.9)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 151 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Standards are generally very high throughout the school, but there are a few exceptions. Students have to pass an entrance examination before joining the school, so they are all academically high attainers. In terms of practical skills, however, their standards on joining the school are much more variable, so the slightly lower standards observed in art and design, music and PE still represent at least good achievement. Similarly, in French and Spanish, the slightly lower standards are because the students have not studied a language before and not a result of worse achievement in the school. In English language, standards are very high but they are slightly lower in English literature because relatively lower attaining students are not always sufficiently engaged in the lessons.
- In all years, the level of achievement can be attributed mainly to the very good quality of teaching that the students receive. However, the students' own very good attitudes also play a significant part in their achievement, especially in design and technology where the teaching is good, rather than the very good more often found in other subjects. On the other hand, in Years 10 and 11, students' achievement in PE is only good, despite the very good teaching, because of problems with accommodation.
- In all years and subjects, there are no differences between the achievements of different groups of students. The achievement of students with special educational needs is very good. Their positive attitudes help them to do very well in meeting the targets of their individual education plans. In lessons, teachers give appropriate support and, where necessary, provide different materials, for example when students have specific learning needs.
- Standards and achievement have improved significantly since the previous inspection.

Sixth form

Standards are very high and students are achieving very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well on almost all courses.
- Achievement is only satisfactory in design and technology.

Commentary

- Results in the 2003 A-level examinations were very high, as they have been in recent years; results were similar in 2004. Students do very well in the sixth form and achieve very well, even given their levels of attainment on joining the sixth form.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	95.0 (98.8)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	53.3 (51.6)	32.6 (35.5)
Average point score per student	391.9 (394.8)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 114 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

9. Standards are well above average in most subjects, so students leave with a total A-level score that is very high and in the top five per cent nationally for girls. In almost all the subjects inspected, students are achieving very well. Standards in theatre studies are above average, rather than well above, because none of the students have studied the subject at GCSE level; their achievement is still very good. However, in design and technology achievement is only satisfactory. The most important factor in bringing about students' achievement is the quality of teaching that they receive. In most subjects teaching is very good, but in design and technology it is only satisfactory. There are, however, other aspects of the school's education that promote such very good achievement. For example, the students' attitudes to their work are significant contributory factors.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (Ethos)

Main school

Students' attitudes, values and personal qualities are very good and are strengths of the school. Students are highly motivated, behave very well and have very good attendance. Their personal development is very good and is promoted very effectively by the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good attitudes to learning, and this improves their achievement.
- Students are extremely appreciative of, and enjoy participating in, the wide range of activities that the school provides.
- Behaviour and relationships are very good; students respond positively to the school's very high expectations regarding conduct.
- Provision for students' social development is very good and their moral development is excellent.
- There are missed opportunities to promote spirituality.

Commentary

10. Students are very well motivated and keen to succeed. Their attitudes are consistently very positive across the school. Students of all ages and levels of attainment want to do well, and they are keen to make good use of the opportunities for learning that the school provides. They like taking part in extra-curricular activities and their level of involvement in them is high. Students are very enthusiastic about the range of clubs and societies that is available to them during the lunch hour and after school. They also praise the quality of the library, which they regard as a very valuable aid to their learning. Students work hard and sustain their concentration well in class, and therefore learn very quickly. They are articulate and enjoy making an active contribution to lessons. Very small numbers of lower attainers do not listen as carefully as they should and as a result do not make as rapid progress as their peers, but this only occurs in a few lessons. Students have very good attitudes to learning outside lessons. They are very conscientious about completing homework tasks, and their diligence makes a major contribution to the standards that they attain.

11. The school has very high expectations regarding students' conduct and has put in place effective measures to see that they are fulfilled. A system of 'Consequences' has been introduced to ensure a consistent approach to discipline across the school and to tackle minor breaches of the rules. Members of staff and students both agree that it has helped to improve behaviour. For example, they say that instances of chatty behaviour in lessons are less common and the school as a whole is a calmer place. Students respond very readily to what is expected of them. They are very orderly and well behaved. They are polite, friendly and co-operative, and have very good relations with members of staff and with one another. There have been a few instances of bullying in the past, but oppressive behaviour of this type is uncommon. The rate of exclusion is low. There have been no permanent exclusions in the last year and the number of fixed period exclusions is well below the national average.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	618	3	0
White – Irish	16		
White – any other White background	25		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	14		
Mixed – White and Black African	4		
Mixed – White and Asian	8		
Mixed – any other mixed background	16		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	121	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	67	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	9		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	8		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	31		
Black or Black British – African	7		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2		
Chinese	18		
Any other ethnic group	13		
Parent/student preferred not to say	22		

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of students excluded. The number of students on roll is for the current year

12. The school makes very good provision for the social development of its students. The house system enables students to become involved with girls from other years and to gain a sense of group identity. The school celebrates students' success through its reward system and the presentation evenings and the house festival days, celebrating not only individual success, but also group projects. As a consequence students recognise the value of their group achievements, as well as their individual success. The atmosphere of the school is very

harmonious and girls benefit from the ethnic diversity of the school. The very good ethos of the school is enabling the students to become confident and well-adjusted members of society.

13. The moral development of the girls is excellent. Students reflect their teachers' positive attitudes and are willing to support one another. Their commitment to their studies and their positive goals are enabling them to make the most of opportunities presented by the school. Their sense of responsibility stretches outside the school and charity fundraising is active and committed. The co-operation given to an individual student's fundraising last year is an example of the girls' mutual support.
14. There are good opportunities for the girls to develop their cultural appreciation through the arts. Music, dance and art competitions provide exciting showcases for their achievements. Display about the school is bright and welcoming, although it does not reflect the variety of cultures represented in Britain. The Cultural Awareness Society run by Year 12 students provides excellent opportunities to celebrate other cultures, for example its food tasting events. Work in design and technology and art courses enable girls to use other styles and cultures as their stimulus. Spiritual development is satisfactory. The 'thought for the day' provides a good opportunity for reflection if the individual form tutor chooses to take it; however, the lack of stimuli for reflection and time in assemblies is significant. Students in Year 11 have no opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs and values through religious education and there is no planned time for their spiritual development in other areas.
15. Attendance is well above the national average and is consistently very good in all year groups. Almost all students are present for a very high percentage of the school year, and this makes a positive contribution to their achievement.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002-2003 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.7	School data	0.2
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

The sixth form

Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. Their attendance is very good and their punctuality is good. The school makes very good arrangements to develop positive personal qualities in its students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have high aspirations and very positive attitudes to learning.
- Their attendance is very good.
- Provision for students' social development is very good.
- Students have excellent opportunities for moral development.
- The very good ethos of the school is enabling the students to become confident and well-adjusted members of society.

Commentary

16. Students have a very positive and mature approach to their education and to life in the school. They enjoy being in the sixth form and are proud to be members of it. They have high aspirations, are keen to learn, and are determined to succeed in their chosen courses. They take

increasing responsibility for organising their work, carrying out their own research and using their private study time to best advantage. They are very articulate and like expressing and developing their own ideas. Relationships are very good. Different groups of students get on very well together, and newcomers to the sixth form are made to feel welcome. Relations with adults are securely based on mutual trust and respect. Students and teachers work very constructively together, and this helps the former to make very good progress with their learning.

17. Attendance is very good and enhances attainment. Some students arrive late to lessons or form time, but punctuality is good overall. The school has rigorous procedures to ensure that students attend lessons and are punctual. Students who are persistently late without good reason are given detentions.
18. Personal development in the sixth form is very good. They accept their responsibility for assisting in the smooth running of the school and their moral development is excellent, Through their support for the clubs and societies, and as prefects and monitors, they take responsibility for other students. The response of the younger girls towards them demonstrates their appreciation. Students are in no doubt about the aims and values of the school and share them. They move about the school in a mature and confident manner, aware of the needs of those around them. They clearly have a sense of duty that is demonstrated through their organisation of the house activities and activities such as the Peer Listening Scheme. Provision for their spiritual and cultural development is good although opportunities to celebrate the cultural diversity of the sixth form and to learn about and appreciate each others cultures are very limited. The lack of religious education in the sixth form reduces the opportunities for reflection on their own beliefs and those of others.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very good education. Teaching and learning are very good. The curriculum, guidance and support are good. Partnership with parents is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Main school

Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 11. The quality of assessment of students' work is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very high degree of consistency in the quality of teaching across the school. It is at least good in all subjects; in most it is very good.
- Teachers fully extend the very highest attaining students; this leads to very high standards.
- The pace and challenge in lessons lead to very good learning for all.
- A very high proportion of lessons is very good or excellent.
- In some lessons the pace of the teaching is too fast for the relatively lower attaining students to keep up and they do not always get the individual attention they need to learn effectively.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 159 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
9 (6%)	66 (41%)	58 (36%)	24 (15%)	2 (1%)	0	0

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

Commentary

19. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good in all subjects apart from music, French, design and technology and RE where it is good. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good in English, ICT, RE and design and technology; in all other subjects it is very good. It is this consistency that is at the heart of the school's very good teaching provision; in around half of all lessons, students can expect to receive teaching that is very good or outstanding and it is relatively rare for them to come across a merely satisfactory lesson.

20. There are many very good features of the teaching, but some are outstanding and these stem from teachers' knowledge of their subject. Teachers do not simply plan lessons to get the content across to students; they plan them to ensure that students will learn at a cracking pace. The planning also takes very careful account of the targets for which students are aiming. These targets are very demanding, as a result of the school's drive to enable students to achieve as much as possible. In nearly all lessons, teachers ensure that students know exactly what they are expected to learn by the end of the lesson; however, where lessons are not as good the lessons are not focused closely enough on what it is that students are supposed to be learning. In many lessons teachers begin with carefully planned starter activities; these engage the students and actively involve them in their own learning. Whilst most teachers include a plenary session at the end of each lesson, these are not always sufficiently well planned to consolidate learning; in some mathematics lessons for example, they are not used at all. Teachers expect all students to achieve very high standards; the activities and tasks they set are usually very challenging and really make the students think. However, one of the relative weaknesses in the teaching is the lack of individual attention given to students who are unable to learn as fast as the rest of the group. Occasionally, for example, instructions and explanations are given slightly too quickly for the very small number of students who are of relatively lower attainment, who do not listen as carefully as they should do or who have difficulties with the subtleties of the English language, regardless of their ethnic background. This does not apply to those with special education needs, who receive very good support.

21. The element of timing is crucial in promoting the excellent pace of learning in lessons. Students will be given seconds, literally, to work something out or to discuss it with a partner. Students often work in groups to discuss, evaluate and analyse tasks; this often leads to very high-level discussions and ensures that students are actively involved in their own learning and can learn from each other. Moreover, students are given plenty of opportunities to develop and express their own ideas. Teaching and learning do not end in the classroom; one of the most obvious examples of the very high expectations of the teachers is the depth and challenge within the set homework. In most subjects challenging, useful and interesting homework tasks are used to genuinely extend students' learning.

22. The key to the school's success, however, is that the features described above are the rule, not the exception, and are applied to all students, regardless of their background. The students are now so used to the demanding pace, exceptional challenge and demands made by their teachers that they just accept it as the norm. In response to this provision, students work exceptionally hard, show a high degree of initiative and strive to produce work of the very highest standard. Students with special educational needs benefit from the very good teaching all students receive. Teachers use individual education plans very well and this explains why learning is so good.

Assessment

23. The school makes good use of information to meet individual needs and to set targets for improvement. Good systems are established to provide information about each student's standard of attainment and potential for future achievement. The school collects and records a substantial amount of data on its students when they enter the school. Information is shared with teachers and used to set individual targets in subjects. The information is regularly updated and collated centrally, so managers have an overview of students' achievement. Some subjects, but not all, record students' National Curriculum levels as they progress from Year 7 to 9. The quality of the day-to-day assessment, however, is variable across and within subjects, and the procedures for students to assess their own performance are embryonic.
24. Between Years 9 and 11 information is used to identify each student's level of attainment and to set individual subject targets of achievement at GCSE level. Heads of department track progress against standards achieved in examinations and assessments, but the school has identified appropriately the need to develop more rigorous practice. Very good practices are operating in some subjects such as in design and technology and ICT, but assessment in citizenship, other than the GCSE course, is unsatisfactory because of weaknesses in procedures and use of information about students' achievement. The arrangements to assess students with special educational needs are good, and the support of external agencies is well used to ensure that students achieve their potential.

Sixth form

Teaching in the sixth form is very good and brings about very good learning. Procedures for, and use of, assessment are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are experts in their subjects and use their extensive knowledge to challenge and extend all students.
- Teaching is very good in virtually all subjects and leads to very good achievement.
- Teaching in design and technology is only satisfactory.

Commentary

25. Many of the same strengths in the teaching found in the main school are also apparent in the sixth form. Teachers possess an excellent knowledge of their subjects and of the examination requirements, so that lessons can be planned that will allow students to reach very high standards in their examinations. The marking in the sixth form is used consistently to provide useful feedback to students; grades and marks are accurate and teachers often provide detailed written comments so that students know what they have to do to improve. Students' progress is tracked very well; there is a well-established system for reviewing students' performance, comparing this with predictions for future attainment, and this allows teachers to intervene promptly if action is needed.
26. Teaching is particularly demanding in virtually all subjects. Subjects such as history and mathematics challenge students to think deeply and to ask questions. In French, students are given authentic articles from France to read; this not only develops their ability to translate from original texts but also helps them to learn about current events and the culture of France. Students are stimulated to think and work independently; teachers have focused their work extremely well on the key thinking skills that are required for the subject, so students achieve exceptionally well in areas such as analysis. As in the main school, teachers make very high demands on students' effort and performance; however, in design and technology, teaching is

only satisfactory largely as a result of the comfortable pace of the lessons, particularly in relation to the technological and technical aspects of the subjects.

Assessment

27. The school has very good procedures and practices to assess and track students' progress in Years 12 and 13. GCSE results and previous performance are used to form the basis for expected achievement at AS and A-level. The school collects a range of information and uses it to set individual targets against which achievement is measured. The school makes very good use of data to review the work of departments and of individual students. Subjects have set criteria linked to the AS and A-level examinations, but there are inconsistencies in the quality of evaluative comment in assignments. The smaller number of students in the sixth form, together with a smaller number of subjects studied by individual students, makes it easier to track an individual student's progress. The school makes very good use of this to ensure that targets are reviewed very frequently.

The curriculum

Main school

The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 11. There is a very good range of extra clubs and activities. The school has a very good match of teachers to its needs; resources are good and accommodation is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are many opportunities for students, in all years, to attend extra clubs and activities.
- RE is not taught to students in Year 11.
- Very good provision is made for students who have special educational needs.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.

Commentary

28. The school has a broader than average curriculum in Years 7 to 11. All students study two languages, for example, in Years 8 and 9, and drama is taught to all students in Year 10. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has recently been expanded to allow students to study more subjects to GCSE level, including citizenship and ICT for all students. This has had an immediate impact on standards, increasing the average points score for each student at GCSE. However, RE is no longer studied in Year 11. This was an error on the part of the school's management brought about by the misreading of the requirements and in no way was it an attempt to deprive students of their entitlement. One other area of weakness is the way that form time is used. Form time lasts for 20 minutes most mornings and some tutors use the time to teach elements of personal, health and social education (PHSE) or to allow for reflection on the thought for the day. In other instances, however, students are left to their own devices after a perfunctory reading of the thought for the day, and simply sit and chat. This variation in approach also explains the failure of the school to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.
29. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. Only a small minority of students has learning difficulties but teachers are quick to notice who requires extra help within lessons, so that learning is not interrupted. In particular, the quality of individual education plans is much better than usually seen, so teachers know exactly what the students' needs are and how to meet them.
30. The school provides a very wide range of activities for students outside of lessons. Many students take part in sporting activities, which are open to all regardless of how talented the student is. There is also a very wide range of musical activities. The highly dedicated staff give most freely of their time to meet with students at lunchtimes and after school, to help them with their academic work. Those who wish to study for more subjects can do so, and go on to attain very high standards at GCSE in subjects such

as dance and a range of languages. The school rightly recognises that all students would be considered to be gifted or talented in some respect if they were in a non-selective school. Therefore the school has two strategies for providing activities for gifted and talented students. The first is open to all, such as whole days for all students to study a particular topic in greater depth. The second approach targets those students who are the most gifted and talented in specific areas and provides a good range of activities for these exceptionally able students.

31. The school has a very experienced and well-qualified teaching staff, with very good support staff. The school is very tight for accommodation, but this is managed very efficiently and causes few problems. The only areas where there is any impact on the students' achievement are in art and design and PE, both of which have activities that are limited by the accommodation. On the positive side, the library is an excellent environment for students with initiatives that encourage them to read and use the library as a workplace.

Sixth form

The curriculum is unsatisfactory because of a lack of core RE and of opportunities for sporting activities. There is a satisfactory range of extra clubs and activities. The school has a very good match of teachers to its needs; resources are good and accommodation is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students do not have the opportunity to take part in any recreational sports during lesson time.
 - RE is not taught to all students in the sixth form.
 - Teachers are very well qualified to teach the sixth form.
 - The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.
32. The school provides a good range of courses that are very suitable for the students in the sixth form. The school uses its links with other schools very well to provide courses for students who wish to study subjects that are not immediately available at the school. However, students in the sixth form do not have the same very good opportunities to enrich their studies and personal development as other students in the school; they have no sporting activities provided during lesson time and are not taught core RE, which is a breach of statutory requirements. As in the main school, students are not provided with a daily act of collective worship. A major strength, however, are the qualifications and experience of the teachers in the sixth form, which are very well matched to the needs of high attaining students.

Care, guidance and support

Main school

Provision for students' care, welfare and health and safety is satisfactory. The quality of support, advice and guidance is good. There are good arrangements for consulting students, acting on their views, and involving them in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good relationships with adults in the school and are able to turn to them for advice and guidance.
- The quality of academic monitoring of students is good.
- Students with special educational needs receive very good support.
- The contribution that personal, social and careers education makes to support and guidance is restricted by the small amount of time available for the subject.

Commentary

33. The quality of individual support and guidance is good and meets students' needs. Students find adults in the school very approachable. They feel comfortable about turning to them for

help with personal or academic difficulties, and they have confidence in the willingness and ability of members of staff to provide effective help. The school's support systems provide students with a good choice of sources of advice. Form tutors and the heads of the lower and middle school are usually the first point of reference for students with personal problems. However, if they wish they may seek help and advice from the school nurse and from their peers. The school makes good provision for students to support one another. There is a mentoring system in which every girl in Year 7 is paired with a student in Year 12 who acts as her friend and guide. There is also a Peer Listening Service which gives support to girls who have worries. Students value these arrangements even when they have had no occasion to make use of them. They are reassured by knowing that there is always someone to whom they can go for help if they are in trouble.

34. The school has good procedures for assessing and monitoring students' academic progress, and these inform and enhance its provision for academic guidance. Students who are failing to fulfil their potential are identified and are given help that meets their individual needs. The school's two learning mentors make a valuable contribution in this area. They provide good support to girls who are having difficulties with their work or are in danger of underachieving, and are generally successful in improving their academic performance. Students of all levels of attainment get good feedback on the quality of their work, and how they can improve it, through marking and discussions with their teachers in class. The school has strengthened its arrangements recently by introducing a review day at which each girl has a personal interview with a member of staff in order to review progress, set targets and agree on action plans.
35. Students with special educational needs receive very good help and guidance. Their individual education plans are very supportive, and there are special care programmes for girls who have medical problems. Where necessary the school uses outside agencies to provide the specialist support that students require.
36. The school has a satisfactory programme of PHSE, but arrangements for delivering it limit its effectiveness. Both PHSE and careers education are taught by form tutors in the fortnightly tutorial period. This does not provide enough time for teachers and students to explore topics in depth. The quality of careers education is satisfactory overall. The careers co-ordinator organises work experience, which is a strength of the school's provision for careers education. Students in Year 10 get the benefit of some high quality placements and make a great success of them.

Sixth form

The school makes satisfactory provision for students' welfare and health and safety. The quality of advice and guidance is very good, with educational support being a particular strength. Arrangements for seeking out and acting on students' views are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes very good arrangements for the induction of students into the sixth form.
- The quality of academic advice and guidance is very good.
- Some students feel that personal support is not as effective as academic support.

Commentary

37. Students receive very good personal support during their induction into the sixth form. Members of Year 12 go on a residential visit to an Oxford college as part of the induction process and thoroughly enjoy the experience. They say that it is an excellent way of getting to

know one another and of developing bonds between individuals in the same tutor group. They feel that it helps them to settle into sixth form and make good progress.

38. There is very good support for students' academic progress. Teachers encourage girls to be independent learners, but are always approachable and accessible if anyone needs extra help and advice. These informal arrangements are backed up by very good formal procedures. The school has put in place a system of academic mentoring for Year 12. Everyone in this year group is mentored by a member of the senior management team. This is not universally popular with students. However, they accept that it helps to promote their progress.
39. Many sixth form students are very happy with the quality of personal support provided by the school. Those in Year 13 say that they get good practical help with filling in their UCAS forms. However, a few students feel that members of staff are only interested in their welfare and aspirations when these affect academic progress and examination results. The inspection did not find evidence to substantiate this view, but the results of the survey carried out by the school in 2003 indicate that students rate personal support less highly than academic support. A large number thought that there was no adult in the school who knew them well and to whom they could turn for help with personal problems.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Main school

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents and good links with other schools, universities and the wider community. Parents' support for learning and involvement in the life of the school has a good impact on students' achievement. Arrangements for consulting them and acting on their views are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a very good reputation with parents, who are very satisfied with the quality of education that it gives their children.
- Parents give very good support to the school and to their children's learning.
- The school is involved in a wide range of partnerships with other schools, and these enhance opportunities for learning and staff development.
- Good links with the community enhance provision for students' learning and personal development.
- A significant number of parents are unhappy with the school's procedures for informing them of their children's progress.

Commentary

40. Overall, parents have very positive views about the school. They are happy with the high expectations that staff have regarding students' learning and behaviour, and they are confident that the school has a good reputation in the community. They are less satisfied with information on students' progress and with guidance on how they can help their children with learning at home. The school has addressed the issue by providing more information on teaching, learning and the curriculum. The school website is a strength in this area. It contains detailed information on the syllabus for each subject of the curriculum, and provides links to other useful sites. Nevertheless some parents are still unhappy with the provision of information on learning and progress. They complain that parents' consultation evenings start and finish too early in the day. Some of them are also unhappy with the quality of written information. They feel that the annual reports on progress are too general and do not say enough about students' achievement. In the judgement of inspectors there is some justification for parents' negative views. Although information on progress is adequate overall, there are weaknesses in the school's arrangements. Parents' evenings are held between 4pm and 6.30pm, which is a difficult time for some

working parents. The school's records suggest that attendance on these occasions is lower than might be expected. The quality of written reporting is satisfactory. However, subject reports do not help parents to help their children to address weaknesses and raise levels of attainment, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

41. Parents have high aspirations for their children and want them to achieve well academically. They therefore give very good support to students' learning. They make very good efforts to ensure that their children attend school and are not absent without good reason. This makes a significant contribution to attainment and achievement. Parents are very keen to support students' learning at home, which is one of the reasons for their wish to have more guidance on how they can help their children. They are very co-operative if there are concerns about their child's work or behaviour. They will work closely with the school on measures to address the student's problems. Parents have a good level of involvement in the life of the school. The parent teacher association is flourishing and there is very strong parental support for school performances and extra-curricular activities. For example parents act as volunteer helpers on trips and provide a 'taxi service' for members of the school's sports teams.
42. There are good links with other schools in the local area and further afield. The school is involved in a wide range of partnerships and initiatives, such as the Sutton Consortium, the Successful Girls Schools network, and Excellence in Cities. These links benefit students' learning by promoting the exchange of ideas, enhancing provision for staff development, and bringing in funding for resources. The school is beginning to strengthen curricular links with its nearest primary schools. The successful bid for science college status has already improved contacts and co-operation in science. However, these developments are at an early stage and have not had time to make a significant impact on students' progress.
43. The school is highly regarded by the local community and receives good support from a number of local organisations. These links make a positive contribution to students' learning and personal development. They are particularly valuable in the area of careers education and guidance. The school's high reputation with local employers enables all students in Year 10 to benefit from work experience. The quality of placements is high, and students' personal development and maturity are greatly enhanced by their time in the world of work.

Sixth form

The school has satisfactory links with parents and good links with universities and the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents very give good support to students' learning.
- The sixth form prospectus provides good information on the sixth form curriculum
- The school's good links with universities enhance the quality of information and guidance for students about the next stage of their education.

Commentary

44. Parents give very good support to students' learning and make a major contribution to their daughters' achievement. They have high aspirations. They expect and encourage students to learn and to get good examination results, and to go on to higher education. Parents' expectations are shared by their daughters, who are very well motivated and keen to succeed. These factors have a very positive effect on attainment and progress in the sixth form.

45. The quality of information for parents is satisfactory overall. The sixth form prospectus is informative and gives parents a good account of courses and routines. It is well supported by the school website, which provides additional details on the syllabuses for sixth form subjects.
46. The school has good links with a number of universities, including Oxford, Birmingham and Warwick. It uses these contacts effectively to provide students with good information on higher education. Visits to universities enhance students understanding of the options open to them, the suitability of courses and the demands of university life. The school's link with the University of Oxford also makes a valuable contribution to provision for personal development. Students agree that their residential visit to an Oxford college at the beginning of Year 12 was a marvellous experience and an excellent introduction to the sixth form.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Main school

The leadership of the school by the headteacher and other senior staff is very good; management is good. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving rapidly as a result of very good leadership.
- There is a great sense of teamwork in the school.
- Very good leadership at all levels is ensuring a high degree of consistency in the school's work.
- Systems for checking on the quality of some aspects of the school's work are not working well enough.
- Some statutory requirements are not met.

Commentary

47. Standards at the school have been rising rapidly since the school was last inspected. In particular, the underachievement in the national tests has been dealt with most successfully and students now do much better than expected in these tests. This level of improvement is a result of the very good leadership provided by the headteacher and the staff in senior posts of responsibility. There is a great and real sense of teamwork at the school at all levels. Throughout the school, staff work together, striving to provide the best possible education for the students. The headteacher's sense of purpose and high aspirations set the agenda for the school's future and other staff willingly play their part in ensuring that the school's priorities are met.
48. The leadership provided at middle management level is also very good, reflecting the consistency in quality that has been achieved in other aspects of the school's work, such as teaching and standards. Leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. Students with special needs achieve as well as other students. Heads of school have a significant input in writing the very good individual education plans. Since the last inspection achievement of, and provision for, students with special needs have improved.
49. The governors rightly rely heavily on the information provided to them by the senior management team. However, they then use their good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses to ensure that they carry out their role of 'critical friend' well, challenging and supporting the senior managers where appropriate. The weakness is the governors' failure to ensure that the school is providing a daily act of collective worship and also to provide RE for all students in Year 11. This latter point results from a misreading of the statutory requirement, rather than any intent to deprive students of their entitlement.

50. The school has tried to provide a daily act of worship through the ‘thought for the day’, but some teachers do not use it and others only in the most perfunctory of manners. The use of form time is one area where the school could improve its provision. At present the systems for checking on what is going on in the school are good at picking up, and rectifying, weaknesses in lessons but are not identifying weaknesses in form time. Similarly, there are real strengths in the teaching that are not being shared with other teachers to enable good lessons to be turned into very good lessons. Nevertheless, the way that managers analyse data and use the results to improve standards is particularly good at a senior level; senior managers have a very clear understanding of the schools’ strengths and relative weaknesses.
51. The school used its status as a Beacon School well to help other schools. The same good management is now being used to build on the links it had already forged to develop its status as a specialist science college. Although in its very early days, the school is already showing successes because of the very high quality planning that went into the school’s submission.
52. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis because it has clear systems for all aspects of its work. New teachers find this especially helpful as procedures are made easy for them to follow, giving them more time to concentrate on their teaching.

Sixth form

The leadership of the sixth form is very good; its management and governance are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The tutors work as a very good team.
- Standards are improving as a result of very good leadership.
- The new system for reviewing subjects is very good, but some weaknesses have not been dealt with quickly enough in the past.

Commentary

53. The improvement in the sixth form has mirrored that in the main school, because the systems that are used are similar to those in the main school. The level of teamwork is again very good, particularly among the team of form tutors. However, there are some differences. The smaller size of the sixth form makes it easier to monitor the progress of individual students and the head of sixth form has taken full advantage of this to provide better assessment systems than exist in the main school. However, when issues arose with the achievement of students on the design and technology course taught at another school, actions were not taken quickly enough to avoid some students underachieving. Similarly, when the school identified problems with the core RE course, actions taken to replace it were too slow and have left current students without their entitlement.
54. The school has recently introduced a system of departmental review. This has been applied to two subjects in the sixth form and the results provide an accurate picture of the subjects’ performance and a very clear basis for improving provision. This is another area where the sixth form is stronger than the main school, as no such system has been used as yet lower down the school.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3933840	Balance from previous year	262829

Total expenditure	3589932
Expenditure per student	3576

Balance carried forward to the next	606737
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OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning [WRL]

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Not applicable	Not applicable
Achievement	Not applicable	Not applicable
Teaching and learning	Not applicable	Not applicable

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A senior member of staff has taken charge of WRL giving leadership and direction to the subject.
- A successful analysis of the use made of WRL has taken place.
- There are not enough links with businesses.

Commentary

55. During the inspection it was not possible to see any lessons directly related to WRL.
56. WRL has very recently been introduced to the school and is co-ordinated by a member of the senior management team. A very recent analysis of WRL is acting as a development plan for the subject. The analysis shows that the school is seeking to build upon the work experience placements at the end of Year 10 and subjects like business education, ICT, citizenship and careers which have staff with experience of industry and business. Students value their work experience placement with a very large majority of students finding their own placement. Time is set aside in the PHSE programme for de-briefing of work experience placements. Students are given the opportunity to make presentations to their peers and interested employers about what they learned about the placement.
57. WRL is at the very early stages of development and the impact of WRL on learning and achievement is very limited. In most subjects, students are involved in problem solving and working both independently and collaboratively, which enhances their learning. WRL seeks to consolidate this from experience in the workplace. In lessons students are frequently engaged in working in groups, delivering presentations, producing reports and analysing data. These features of the school's teaching and learning successfully link with the world of work. The school has not developed enough business, commercial and industrial partnerships in order to further enliven and enrich students' learning and achievement.

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**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in GCSE English and tests at the end of Year 9 are very high compared to the national averages, as a result of students' very good achievement.
- Students' skills in speaking and listening are a particular strength throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Teachers possess very good subject knowledge.
- Results in GCSE English literature are well above average, but are below the very high levels obtained in GCSE English.
- Teaching methods do not sufficiently take into account the needs of relatively low attaining students in the teaching of GCSE English literature.

Commentary

Examination results

58. In 2003, results obtained at the end of Year 9 were very high compared to the national average. In 2003, GCSE results obtained in English were very high; in English literature they were well above average. Overall, 2004 results were similar to the 2003 results.

Standards and achievement

59. Achievement, teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are less consistent and this results in achievement still being very good in GCSE English, but being no better than good in English literature.
60. In Years 7 to 9 students' skills in speaking and listening are far above average. Virtually all students are keen to take part in a full range of speaking activities and can explain themselves fully, using an appropriate and interesting vocabulary. Students listen to each other and to their teachers intently. Written work is consistently of a very high standard. Students possess very good basic skills and can express themselves with clarity and accuracy. Students read widely, read aloud with very good expression and have a very good understanding of what they read.
61. In Years 10 and 11 students further develop their skills in speaking and listening, becoming yet more confident and articulate, moving easily from one-to-one conversations to addressing the whole class. In class discussion they speak in turn and are ready to politely challenge the views

of the teacher or other students. Students' written work remains of a high standard. Many students redraft their work with excellent attention to detail and so improve its quality. Most students are able to read and understand complex literature. However, some of the relatively lower attaining students find difficulty in being able to express their response to literature adequately in writing or to offer independent opinions on what they have studied.

Teaching and learning

62. When teaching is most effective, teachers possess very good subject knowledge and so are able to teach very able and enthusiastic students at a high academic level. Students become stimulated and challenged and want to explore the subject more fully and enjoy using and developing their skills. Teachers have high expectations of students. They are expected to produce work of the highest standard and in turn, they go to great lengths to do exactly that. This is seen particularly in manner in which students from Years 7 to 11 redraft their work to improve its quality. Teachers respect the intelligence and curiosity of the students in the way they teach. This means that the pace of lessons is brisk and the work is varied, so students are interested and motivated. The quality of questioning is good, so students are probed and so think more deeply. In many lessons, students are provided with the 'space' to assimilate new ideas and to share them with other students so as to increase their understanding. A further effect of this teaching method is that students are given ample opportunities to develop their skills in speaking and listening. In drama lessons, too, students are encouraged to be active in their own learning and, in doing so, they become more socially confident and more articulate. Homework is set regularly. It is relevant and varied and helps students to achieve their targets. The vast majority of students have excellent attitudes to the work and this makes a very important contribution to their achievement.
63. When teaching is less effective, teachers do not sufficiently take into account the prior attainment and needs of all students, including those who are relatively lower attainers and those for whom English is an additional language. In particular, teachers tend to tell students what they should write rather than show them how to do it. This is a significant limitation when teaching lower attainers in Years 10 and 11 how to write analytically about literature. Some of the marking is superficial and does not provide students, especially the lower attainers, with the detailed guidance they need if they are to improve.

Leadership and management

64. The head of department is a good role model as a teacher; he has done much to promote high expectations amongst teachers and students. However, investigations into why results in GCSE literature are lower than those in English, and what action needs to be taken, have been less rigorous than might be expected.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

65. Students' standards of language and literacy are very high. Students are very articulate and participate very well in lessons. Their reading and writing skills are also well developed, so students are extremely well placed to meet the various demands of the National Curriculum. Subjects are taught in such a way that students are constantly being challenged and so continue to develop their capacity to communicate.

Modern foreign languages

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	French: well above average Spanish: well above average	French: very high Spanish: very high
Achievement	French: good Spanish: very good	French: very good Spanish: very good
Teaching and learning	French: good Spanish: very good	French: very good Spanish: very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are very well prepared for examinations and achieve very well.
- Students have very good attitudes and complete a lot of work both at home and in class.
- Students' listening and reading skills are well developed.
- In French in Years 7 to 9, students' oral work is less consistently well developed.

Commentary

Examination results

66. In French and Spanish, examination results were very high in 2003 and remained at a similar level in 2004. Many more students were entered for both languages than was the case nationally; all students study at least one language and about 20 per cent study both French and Spanish.

Standards and achievement

67. By the end of Year 9, students of all groups and attainment levels are working well above the level that would be expected of them nationally in French, which represents good achievement as a result of good teaching. In Spanish, students are also working well above the level that would be expected nationally and this is very good achievement as they have only had two years of studying the language, but the teaching is of a better standard in Spanish. Students are very confident when listening to tapes on familiar topics and can read passages that have a range of tenses and structures in them with little difficulty. On the whole, students' speaking skills are slightly less well developed than their writing skills as they get less practice at this in class. Almost all can manage three tenses and give their opinions on a range of topics.
68. By the end of Year 11, students' skills are very high in both languages; they achieve very well because they have very good attitudes and they are extremely well prepared for the examination as a result of very good teaching. Students show very good commitment, completing homework diligently and doing work independently of the teacher. In both languages higher attainers perform particularly well in reading and listening. Students have well-developed listening skills as they have plenty of practice listening to tapes and videos and are encouraged to listen at home to tapes which teachers provide for them. In writing they enjoy the opportunity to do coursework in French, producing some high quality work, but they do little creative work in either language. When writing in Spanish students are able to express themselves very well, using idiomatic expressions and adding touches of humour to their work when discussing, for example, how uniform could be improved. Speaking is good overall but for the lower attaining students in this school it is often the weakest skill; they lack confidence and have less good pronunciation and fluency.

Teaching and learning

69. In both languages, teachers have a very good command of their subject and often use French or Spanish for instructions to tasks so students hear a lot of the foreign language used in the classroom and develop good listening skills. Teachers select resources well, using tapes and video frequently to allow students access to a wide variety of spoken French and Spanish. Teachers are skilled at teaching to the requirements of the GCSE examination and prepare students very well.
70. In very good lessons, which were seen in both languages, teachers used a range of activities, including games, that motivated students. Students were expected to complete a lot of work in a short time and to pay careful attention to accuracy. In several French lessons in Years 7 to 9, however, students spent too little time practising the oral work in particular. There were missed opportunities for students to speak in pairs and groups as much of the oral work was done from the front of the class with the teacher. Students did not often use the language spontaneously, for example to ask for more paper or to say they need help, although they managed this well in one Year 11 Spanish lesson. Students' spoken work is generally well corrected but students are not given as much feedback on how to improve their pronunciation as they are on how to improve their written work.
71. Generally teachers provide carefully structured lessons, which build up students' understanding in a wide variety of ways. For example, in a very good French lesson in Year 10, students discussed how they got on with members of their family and were able to justify their opinions. In Spanish in a Year 11 lesson, students were confident when discussing their work experience, using some complex language and several tenses as well as a wide range of vocabulary.
72. Relationships between staff and students are very good; students know that they are expected to work hard and teachers rarely have to deal with instances of lack of attention. Teachers use ICT effectively to make their presentations of teaching points clear and, when they have access to the equipment, ICT is used well by students, but not every group gets this opportunity.

Leadership and management

73. Examination results are monitored and compared to national standards so teachers know what improvements are needed and results have risen in Spanish. The weaker area, in the oral standards in French, has been correctly identified as an area for development but as yet this has not resulted in an improvement. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good; results have risen and the quality of teaching has improved.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are very well prepared for and consequently attain very high standards in both the Year 9 national tests and the Year 11 GCSE examinations.

- Teachers are very experienced and have a very good knowledge and understanding of mathematics.
- The head of department provides very good leadership and management of a strong department, with a clear vision to raise standards.
- Students' very good attitudes, combined with very good teaching, lead to very good achievement.

Commentary

Examination results

74. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were very high. In 2004 the results were broadly similar to those of 2003. The GCSE results in 2003 were also very high. In 2004 the results improved even further, more than doubling the percentage of A* grades attained by students.

Standards and achievement

75. By the end of Year 9, students' numerical skills are very high. Higher attaining students can very confidently use sine, cosine, and tangent in right-angled triangles to solve problems in two dimensions. The lower attainers can construct pie charts to display their data as well as accurately interpret them. In Year 11, students use well the discriminant to test whether a quadratic expression can be solved when they determine the roots of a quadratic equation. The lower attainers understand velocity-time graphs well and can accurately calculate speed and distance travelled.

Teaching and learning

76. Teachers are very experienced so students are very well prepared for, and attain very high standards in, the Year 9 national tests and the Year 11 GCSE examinations. Combined with the very good teaching and the teachers' very high expectations, the students' very good attitudes to learning result in their very good achievement. The appropriate and consistent use of homework further extends their learning and is used well in lessons to raise achievement. The guidance provided by the national strategy on lesson planning is fully integrated into lessons and is particularly effective at the beginning of lessons, where starter activities quickly get students into the correct frame of mind to learn. However, recapitulations at the end of lessons are not used sufficiently or of a high enough quality to consolidate what has been learnt. Overall, the work provided for students is very challenging. However, even more challenge could be built into lessons for individual higher attaining students to really stretch them. In the best lessons independent and collaborative learning skills are developed well. For example, in one Year 8 lesson on ratios, students were invited to discuss in pairs, six situations involving ratios and then feed back their understanding. This helped to clarify the students' thinking and understanding of the topic.

Leadership and management

77. Very good leadership is provided by the head of department who is a very good role model with a clear vision to raise standards within the department. The very good management results in a strong, efficient department, in which the teachers conscientiously work hard as a team. Very good planning and development take place alongside good self-review in order to drive the department forward and raise standards further. Very good use of assessment data is made to track student performance, set targets and inform the planning and monitoring needs within the department. Schemes of work are in place for all years. However, in Years 10 and 11 these schemes make little mention of the use of ICT or the use of suggested starter activities. As a result they do not always fully support teachers. Teaching and students' achievement have improved considerably since the previous inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

78. Standards of numeracy are very high in all years. The mathematics department has trained teachers of other subjects in the teaching of mathematics and has carried out an audit of

provision. This has resulted in guidance notes being produced for departments on drawing graphs and the methods of teaching the basic operations in mathematics.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students do much better in GCSE science than might be expected in relation to their standards when they enter the school.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and have excellent knowledge of their subject.
- Students enjoy science; they concentrate very well and work hard.
- Occasionally, instructions and explanations are given rather too quickly for a few students in the class.

Commentary

Examination results

79. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were very high compared with the national average, continuing the upward trend in these results. The 2004 results were similar to those for 2003. Results in the 2003 GCSE double award science examinations were also very high. In 2004, GCSE results improved, with a higher proportion of students gaining the highest grade A*.

Standards and achievement

80. Standards are uniformly very high in all year groups and across the three strands of science: biology, chemistry and physics. Students generally have excellent knowledge and understanding of current topics and ones they studied earlier in the course. However, in recent years, students have not done quite as well in the investigation aspect of their GCSE assessments. The department has improved its systems for teaching investigative skills and students now achieve very high standards in investigations. Students in Year 11, for example, investigated the 'cracking' of liquid paraffin most efficiently. They explained their predictions and findings clearly and precisely in terms of the bonds and the changes in structure.

81. At the end of Year 9 and Year 11, students gain much better test and examination results than might be expected from their test results when they enter the school. Hence their achievement is very good, mainly as a result of very good teaching.

Teaching and learning

82. The major strength of this department lies in the consistency of good, and sometimes very good, teaching that students experience, irrespective of their year group or whether the lesson is

biology, chemistry or physics. Students respond well to the enthusiasm of their teachers, enjoy the subject and work very hard.

83. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subject. They plan lessons that are challenging and include a range of interesting activities to hold students' concentration and enable them to learn quickly throughout the lesson. In one very good lesson, students moved rapidly from an initial discussion of the shallower appearance of a swimming pool, via a computer simulation of wave motion and on to producing detailed drawings of light rays in several different situations. The activities, together with very clear explanations, combined to give all students a very secure and detailed understanding of the refraction of light.
84. Teachers have very good questioning techniques. They place strong emphasis on students developing precision in their spoken answers, thus ensuring that the whole class hears an explanation or description of the highest quality. The department makes very good use of valuable homework tasks that genuinely extend students' learning.
85. The very quick pace of lessons is a real strength; no time is wasted. Occasionally, however, instructions and explanations are given rather too quickly for the very small number of students who have slightly lower ability or who have minor difficulties with some of the subtleties of the English language. These students then need to have the explanation or instructions repeated and their progress is slower than that of other students.

Leadership and management

86. The science department works very well together as a team, sharing a commitment to very high standards and continuous improvement. The monitoring of the work of the department is generally good but there is not enough formal observation of lessons, particularly in order to identify and share the strengths and good ideas from individual teachers' lessons.
87. GCSE results have improved since the time of the previous inspection and teaching remains very good. There have also been significant improvements in accommodation, learning resources and the amount of technician support. Hence the department has made very good progress since it was last inspected.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in Years 7 to 9 as a result of very good teaching.
- Very good leadership has resulted in very good progress being made since the previous inspection.

- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is not as exciting or engaging as in Years 7 to 9 so students do not achieve quite as well
- The school has good up-to-date ICT facilities that promote effective use of ICT across the school.

Commentary

Examination results

88. In 2003, results at GCSE were very high when compared with the national average; this level of attainment was maintained in 2004.

Standards and achievement

89. By the end of Year 9, students' knowledge and practical skills are very high when compared to the national average because they are provided with a well-structured course that enables them to achieve very well from their wide range of experience upon entering the school.
90. Students are familiar with the use of the Internet, word processing and databases and their understanding of the theory associated with the subject is very well developed. National resources are being used alongside home-grown highly imaginative materials. Higher attainers produce advanced work using complex software and imaginative designs in their presentations. Lower attainers are more dependent on teachers for guidance but still produce work of a very high standard. By the end of Year 11, students' skills are again very high. Their ability to use spreadsheets and databases is far better than usually found. They produce high quality examination coursework and use Internet search engines with ease.

Teaching and learning

91. Teaching is characterised by very good knowledge of the subject, which is used well to ask searching questions and stretch the students within lessons. Teachers plan their lessons very well. They have high expectations of what students can achieve and also how students should behave. Good use is made of digital projectors to demonstrate each aspect of the lesson in manageable chunks. In Years 7 to 9, students learn and achieve very well because teaching is exciting and incorporates a range of very interesting topics that ensure students are motivated and enthusiastic. Students enjoy ICT lessons because of the up-to-date computers and imaginative and engaging projects they are presented with as they enter the school.
92. In Years 10 and 11, teachers know the requirements of the examination syllabus very well. They work hard to cram in enough information in a short space of time to ensure all students achieve well. The course is taught in only one hour per week which is far less than the norm; this results in a range of teaching styles that does not engage all students as fully as in Years 7 to 9. Lessons do not contain the same variety of interesting tasks and are not structured as tightly as those for the younger students; consequently students do not achieve quite as well.

Leadership and management

93. ICT was a key issue for the school in the previous report. Very good leadership has tackled this issue and enabled the department to make very good progress to a position of considerable strength.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

94. The use of computers in other areas of the curriculum is good. The ratio of students to computers is in line with the national average; this allows discrete ICT lessons to take place as well as enabling students to practise their skills in other subjects. In many subjects the Internet is used well for research and appropriate information is selected and presented using word-

processing and publishing software. Nearly all subjects use the ICT rooms well and students value the lunchtime clubs. Standards are very high in all years.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Very good.
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection.	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A strong combination of very good teaching and highly motivated students ensures that very high standards are consistently maintained and that achievement is very good.
- Very good procedures for assessment ensure that students are aware of their progress and of how to improve their work.
- Very good leadership and good management have ensured very good progress since the previous inspection.

Commentary

Examination results

95. GCSE results in 2003 were very high. Provisional results for 2004 indicate improvement, especially at the highest grades.

Standards and achievement

96. Standards are very high at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 across all aspects of students' work, which represents very good achievement. Students achieve very well. This is consistent across all the ethnic groups in the school and across different levels of attainment. Teachers ensure that students develop not only a high level of factual knowledge in the subject, but also the very good interpretation and investigation skills that are essential to success. This is evident in the extensive geographical vocabulary acquired by students and in their detailed knowledge of geographical patterns that exist throughout the world.

Teaching and learning

97. This strong combination of very good teaching and students' excellent attitudes to work is the strongest single factor in the high level of success and continuing rise in standards found in geography. Teachers have very good subject knowledge both of the factual content for work at this very high level, and of the best ways in which to prepare students for success in examinations. Lessons are very well planned often with starter activities so that lessons get off to a prompt start and no time is wasted. Very good assessment procedures allow teachers to track students' attainment and progress. Assessment is used very well to show students what they need to do to improve their work. Geography makes a good contribution to students' literacy development. Students carry out a range of extended writing activities which are well supported by field courses and case studies. These are also strong contributory factors in the very good independent learning skills that students develop. Students also use a range of tables, graphs and measurements in many lessons, thus making a good contribution to numeracy development. The contribution of geography to citizenship is not as strong as it could be, because elements of citizenship found in many lessons are not made sufficiently clear to students.

Leadership and management

98. Leadership of the subject is very good. The head of department has shown very good leadership in supporting his colleague and in setting up clear priorities for development. Management of the department is good. A good curriculum is in place and standards are rising. There are still some aspects of ICT and citizenship that need further development. Geography makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The spiritual dimension was lacking at the time of the previous inspection and this has improved. The subject has made very good progress since the previous inspection; results and standards have improved.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are very high because students are well prepared for the examination.
- Students achieve very well because of very good teaching.
- Leadership is very good and has led to very good progress since the previous inspection.
- Arrangements to assess and monitor students' progress are not as good as other aspects of the provision.

Commentary

Examination results

99. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were very high compared to the national average. The very high results have been maintained in 2004.

Standards and achievement

100. By the end of Year 9, students make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of topics. They make significant progress in developing skills in analysing and interpreting sources of historical evidence and write well-structured, reasoned accounts of events. Increasingly, students show self-reliance in researching topics but do not use ICT enough to seek information. They write for different audiences, such as imaginative writing about the morality of the African slave trade and are well able to sequence events in time. A few students, however, do not achieve quite as well because they do not develop answers in sufficient detail. At the end of Year 11 students have made very good progress in extending the range and depth of knowledge of topics. They know a wide range of terms and use them well in extended writing. Most students make substantial gains in analysing and evaluating evidence to show understanding about events, such as the political and social changes in Russia circa 1918. Some students, however, are insecure in recalling work previously studied and do not develop answers enough when speaking.

Teaching and learning

101. Students in Years 7 to 9 benefit from being taught by enthusiastic, specialist teachers and as a result students learn and achieve very well. Lessons are generally very well planned and managed, so that students know what is expected and are keen to rise to the challenges provided. As a result learning is brisk, time is well used and much is achieved in lessons. Work is regularly marked, but not enough attention is given to evaluation and target setting. In Years 10 and 11 teachers have very good subject knowledge and are experienced in the course expectations. This experience is used well to ensure that students do their best in examinations. Teachers make high demands on students' performance. Students rise to the challenge, producing structured and detailed answers. Occasionally the pace of learning is insufficiently brisk and this reduces opportunities to consolidate what has been learned.

Leadership and management

102. The curriculum is well planned and the schemes of work give guidance about what is to be taught but do not provide enough information about contributions to promoting citizenship, number and ICT. Development planning is very good and there is critical analysis undertaken of the subject's performance and of where improvements can be made. Data is analysed about how well students achieve but, in Years 7 to 9, not enough use is made of National Curriculum levels to track progress, and the quality of day-to-day marking is not monitored for consistency. Since the previous inspection GCSE results have improved, standards in Years 7 to 9 risen and students' achievement is better.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 10
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students do well at GCSE because of the good teaching they receive.
- Students respect each other's opinions and so are willing to exchange ideas.
- RE is not taught to students in Year 11
- There is too little opportunity to investigate other cultures and beliefs through first-hand experience.

Commentary

Examination results

103. GCSE results for the full and short courses in 2003 were well above average. Results in 2004 are much higher with three-quarters of all Year 10 students on both courses achieving grades A* or A.

Standards and achievement

104. By the end of Year 9 all students have completed half the short GCSE course in which they all will be examined at the end of Year 10. They have a very secure grasp of Christian and Islamic

teachings with reference to contemporary moral issues and easily understand that belief in religious concepts affects the decisions people make. They have a very good understanding of the different theories of creation and their merits.

105. Students in Year 11 do not follow a course in religious education that meets requirements. However, the standards of students in Year 10 are well above the levels expected of students in Year 11. Students write long pieces, demonstrating their ability to consider differing viewpoints, but they do not analyse deeply, and at times their conclusions do not reflect consideration of the alternative views they have identified. In oral work, when they are required to defend their own views, they develop their responses more fully and demonstrate the depth of their understanding. Students respect each other's opinions and are confident and ready to put forward their ideas.
106. Students following the full GCSE course achieve a very secure understanding of the religious concepts and teachings they have studied. Their responses are confident and detailed and they are able to explain and present opinion clearly. They have a good grasp of the requirements of the examination and the revision master-classes and revision day enable them to achieve well in the examination.

Teaching and learning

107. Lessons are well planned to use a range of different techniques, but there are insufficient opportunities for students to investigate other cultures and beliefs through first-hand experience, and not enough time is allowed for students to reflect on their own beliefs. Teachers have a very good understanding of the requirements of the examination board and provide very good guidance for the students; this allows them to do well in the examinations. Girls are well motivated and are prepared to concentrate well. They take pride in their work and their books are attractively presented.

Leadership and management

108. The department works well as a team and this is enabling teachers to work to their strengths for the good of the whole department. The short course has been successfully introduced for all, and the introduction of the master-classes and revision day has contributed to the students' success. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory as all students now achieve a GCSE accreditation. However, Year 11 no longer has a full course of religious education, which is a breach of statutory requirements. This situation has arisen because of a misunderstanding of the law, rather than any deliberate intent to deprive students of their entitlement.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

The quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
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Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching in all years, together with students' excellent attitudes, ensures that students achieve very well.
- Standards are rising as a result of good leadership and management.
- The way that resistant materials is taught in Year 10 is too narrow and prevents students from experiencing a wide range of materials and processes.

Commentary

Examination results

109. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were very high in relation to the national average. Results were similar in 2004.

Standards and achievement

110. The standards achieved by students at the end of Year 9 are very high in all aspects of the subject. Students are articulate and can explain their ideas and understanding very effectively. In food and textiles lessons, students draw upon different cultural influences in their designing; the outcomes of these activities not only reflect the cultural diversity of the students but also promote creativity. By the end of Year 11 most students show confidence in using a range of materials and processes and use product analysis effectively. Students' work is often outstanding, particularly in textiles, food technology and graphics where coursework is characterised by thorough analysis, detailed research and exceptional presentation. ICT is well used for presentation and is having a beneficial effect upon standards; however, CAD/CAM (computer aided design/manufacture) is not being used for designing and making in graphics or resistant materials. In consequence standards of designing and making could be even better in these areas. Students' attitudes are excellent and the hard work and initiative they show are a major factor in lifting their achievement above the level usually expected as a result of good teaching.

Teaching and learning

111. Students benefit from knowledgeable teachers who demonstrate an interest in the subject. Lessons are planned well, and the pace of lessons is usually brisk. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of all students. Teachers use their own knowledge and experience to challenge and extend students. Students benefit from the high expectations of their teachers and respond positively to the challenging activities. Homework is used well to reinforce learning. Where teaching is excellent, the pace of lessons is brisk, and students are inspired through challenging activities that encourage active participation. In contrast, lessons in resistant materials are uninspiring and lack intellectual challenge. The standard of marking and ongoing assessment is very good; teachers assiduously mark students' work and set targets for future improvement. Students are generally aware of their own performance targets and know what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

112. The department is well led. The head of department is very effective, understands the strengths and weaknesses in provision and has made significant improvements to the curriculum. However, the uninspiring nature of lessons in resistant materials has not been dealt with. The department has benefited from investment in the accommodation and resources since the

previous inspection. Overall the quality of resources is now good; however, the lack of CAD/CAM equipment is impeding further improvements. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. A course in graphic products has been successfully introduced and the very high standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have improved still further.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good	
Management	Good	
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and inspires students to very good achievement.
- Students have very good attitudes and sustain concentration impressively.
- The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There is inadequate provision for three-dimensional work.

Commentary

Examination results

113. In 2003 results in GCSE were very high. Results were similar in 2004.

Standards and achievement

114. Students enter with above average skills in drawing, but average skills in other areas. By Year 9 standards are well above average. Students acquire very good skills in the use of line and in shading to achieve tone and texture. They are highly creative and imaginative in presenting their own personal ideas and feelings through imagery, inspired by studies of Surrealist artists. However, they have done a limited amount of three-dimensional work, chiefly because they are taught in large classes of over 30 in the first three years. Standards are very high by Year 11. Students build well on their skills and are highly creative and imaginative in developing their own ideas. All work is highly individual and personal and leads students to consider social and emotional aspects of life in the modern world. All work shows very good depth and detail and is generally brought to a fine finish. Students work diligently and at a very good pace. They sustain concentration impressively.

Teaching and learning

115. The teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and this enthusiasm inspires the students. They give excellent illustrations of the work of major artists and art movements that inspire their students. They also demonstrate the key skills of drawing and painting, including point perspective, so that the students can learn from visual examples. They give very good one-to-

one support in lessons so that all students make equally good progress. Teachers provide very good ideas for extending work that supports all students, especially the gifted and talented. Assessment and marking give students clear guidance on how to improve.

Leadership and management

116. Leadership is very good with a clear vision for maintaining the very high standards and for extending provision further. There is good teamwork and monitoring. The subject makes a good contribution to students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by studies from a range of cultures that include Aboriginal, African, Indian and Islamic art. There are extensive displays of students’ work that create interest, inspire the students and enhance the school environment. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The very high standards of work have been maintained but the accommodation has not improved so the curriculum is still restricted as far as three-dimensional work is concerned.

Music

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Very high
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well, due to good teaching and the impact of extensive opportunities to learn instruments and perform together.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very good; they are excellent in GCSE classes.
- The participation of students from Asian backgrounds is very limited outside of lessons.

Commentary

Examination results

117. Although there are too few entries each year to make reliable comparisons with the national average, when aggregated over four years, results are very high.

Standards and achievement

118. From Year 7 to Year 9 students achieve well. A sizeable proportion, twice the national average, learn instruments and singing in school, and many students reach high standards of performance by Year 9. Many of these higher attaining and talented students apply their skills creatively in composition. All students perform well in groups, singing confidently in up to three parts and individually contributing to instrumental ensembles. They understand well musical concepts, such as intervals, scales and chords, and use technical vocabulary accurately to evaluate music. By Year 11 standards are very high. Students play and sing sensitively, if sometimes reticently, and compose with flair and creativity. They relate sound with notation very well and absorb information about musical styles intelligently. While students from Asian backgrounds participate well in class, their participation in optional courses, such as GCSE or extra-curricular groups, is very limited.

Teaching and learning

119. Lessons are well planned to build upon the very good attitudes of the students. The teachers' very good subject knowledge ensures that discussion is well led and challenges the students intellectually, as when one girl cleverly linked Harry Potter music to the material of the lesson. Careful attention to technique in practical work ensures all students progress well. With the smaller, more highly motivated groups in Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well. These students' attitudes are excellent, showing strong commitment in class and in extra-curricular activities, often in demanding leading roles. The quality of marking is especially good in Years 10 and 11, challenging students to reflect carefully on their work. Teaching instils clear routines, making effective use of time. Some lessons in Years 7 to 9 lack musical variety, limiting the commitment of the talented musicians and insufficiently challenging lower attaining students. ICT is well used by teachers and GCSE students, but infrequently in lower years.

Leadership and management

120. Good leadership and management of the department ensure that the large number of part-time teachers is well supported. A wide range of subsidised vocal and instrumental lessons, including sitar, feeds into a good range of instrumental ensembles. Both choirs sing with passion and conviction. Through the growth in participation in extra-curricular activities, more students are reaching out through music into the wider community, whether through operatic ventures with the local boys' grammar school or through high-profile concert projects. Music makes a very good contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The two-week timetable impacts adversely on the continuity of provision for some classes, and assessment is not yet used as a tool for planning departmental priorities.

121. Since the previous inspection the department has made good progress. Standards have risen, but accommodation has not been improved, limiting the department's ability to expand to its full potential.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership provides a clear vision and direction for the subject.
- Students achieve very well because they have very good attitudes to their work and receive very good teaching.
- Poor indoor accommodation constrains the curriculum and restricts students' opportunities to achieve high standards in some activities.
- A very good extra-curricular programme gives all students, particularly the gifted and talented, the opportunity to excel in school and beyond.

Commentary

Examination results

122. The 2003 GCSE examination results were very high. Results in GCSE dance were also very high. In 2004, GCSE results in both subjects were even higher.

Standards and achievement

123. Standards in Year 9 are already above average at this early stage of the year. This represents very good achievement in relation to students' barely average starting point on entering the school. Students of all levels of attainment achieve very well in netball and gymnastics. Students with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, are well integrated and supported, achieving as well as other students.

124. Standards in the Years 10 and 11 core curriculum are above average overall. This is well illustrated by the girls' good knowledge and understanding of the effect of exercise on the body and issues related to health and fitness. Students' attainment in volleyball and badminton is only average. This is because these are new courses, the school's facilities for net games of this kind are inadequate and there has been insufficient time for students to develop their skills. The problems with accommodation and time lead to a lower level of achievement than would usually be expected given students' very good attitudes and the very good teaching. GCSE students attain above average standards in practical work, as seen in volleyball. They have very good knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects, and students of all abilities are achieving very well in their coursework. Standards in extra-curricular sport are very high, reflected in students' individual and team successes at district, county and national level in a wide range of sports and dance.

Teaching and learning

125. Very good teaching reflects high expectations, challenge and a demanding pace of learning. It is the consistent emphasis on quality and improvement that leads to very good achievement in Years 7 to 9. Students' attitudes are very good, and often excellent. Standards of participation, dress and behaviour in lessons are very high, as is students' support of and commitment to extra-curricular activities. Very good planning and organisation ensure that students are actively engaged in a variety of interesting and challenging activities, despite the constraints of the accommodation. A strength of formative assessment is the way students play an active role in self- and peer assessment in many lessons.

Leadership and management

126. Strong leadership has successfully developed a departmental ethos of shared vision and values, based on continuing professional development. Very good teamwork ensures that students' needs come first, despite many difficulties caused by inadequate facilities. Poor indoor facilities constrain the curriculum and restrict students' opportunities to achieve high standards in some activities. The problems are further exacerbated by Years 10 and 11 having to walk to and from a local leisure centre, and the lack of any indoor space during the examination season, both leading to a reduction in time for the subject. A particular strength of the department is accurate self-evaluation, and areas for improvement have been clearly identified. Work has already begun on developing the curriculum for Years 10 and 11, and increasing the use of ICT in teaching and learning. There is a very good enrichment and extra-curricular programme, and the school is moving towards achieving the national strategy for 75 per cent of students to have two hours a week of quality physical education.

127. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. GCSE results have improved and teaching is now very good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Not applicable	Very high
Achievement	Not applicable	Very good
Teaching and learning	Not applicable	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students of all levels of attainment achieve very well.
- Very good teaching brings about very effective learning for students of all levels of attainment.
- There is some variation in the quality of teaching, that is now being tackled.

Commentary

Examination results

128. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were very high and were similar in 2004.

Standards and achievement

129. Students' knowledge and skills are well beyond what might typically be expected; they are achieving very well. At this early stage of the course students in Year 10 already show a clear

understanding of key business ideas and processes. Students have the capacity to work very effectively, independently and collaboratively. Students have very high-level interpretative and evaluative skills; they demonstrate clear understanding of the values involved in business and economic decision making.

Teaching and learning

130. Teaching is very good and students learn and achieve very well as a result. Teachers thoroughly prepare their work using their excellent subject knowledge. Teachers with personal experience in commerce use their mastery of the subject to enlighten and inspire students. The range of teaching methods is varied and students are therefore able to develop different ways of working. Teachers quickly establish a purposeful atmosphere for learning. Achievement is very high because the majority of teaching is both stimulating and challenging. Teachers are knowledgeable about course requirements so that when students in Year 11 learnt the fundamentals of job, batch and flow production, they then had to attempt a typical examination question and mark each other's work. They had all been made well aware of the awarding body's mark scheme and the teacher constantly made reference to the ways to achieve at the very highest levels. Assessment is very well organised. Target setting is undertaken at the beginning of Year 10. Students identify targets each term with steps to be taken to achieve these targets. Individual student performance is then used effectively to review and refocus individual student action plans. As a result of this, all are aware of the progress that they are making and they understand what they need to do to improve their work. Year 11 students are offered extra support at lunchtimes if they feel that this would be beneficial to them.

Leadership and management

131. The head of department leads the department in a conscientious manner and manages it very well. The head of department is well informed and perceptive, ensuring that each teacher has a concern for the needs of individual students. There were several weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Since then there has been a complete review of teaching methods; as a result of this students are becoming more confident, independent learners. Resources are now used highly effectively; and expectations are exemplary. However, there is still some variation in the quality of teaching.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

132. Citizenship and the PHSE programme are integrated with a contribution from all subjects. However, because the school teaches a two-week timetable, and the citizenship and PHSE lessons are taught mainly in the week when the inspection team was not present, it was not possible to judge the quality of teaching and learning. The only lessons available were for Years 7 and 11, who had only just started their courses in citizenship. Furthermore, the sample of work provided was insufficient to allow judgements on standards and achievement to be made for Year 9.

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Achievement	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Teaching and learning	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The time allocated for citizenship constrains the depth of the programme.
- Most students in Year 11 study for a GCSE in citizenship.
- There is insufficient monitoring or evaluation of the citizenship programme.
- Students have good opportunities to take part in significant group activities.

Commentary

133. In 2004, Year 11 students followed a short GCSE course in citizenship with 96 per cent gaining A*-C grades; no national comparisons are available but the results would suggest very high standards.
134. PHSE, citizenship and careers are taught during the tutorial programme in Years 7 to 11. This is taught to all Year 7 students in one lesson every week, and Year 8, 9, 10 and 11 students in one lesson every other week. The allocation of time, therefore, seriously constrains the development of citizenship. There are also contributions from other subjects and from activities outside normal lessons like a re-cycling project. Citizenship, within subjects, is not given a high enough profile and is not made explicit. Subjects, suspended timetable for specific activities and extra-curricular contributions help to add to students' entitlement, which gives breadth to the subject. Students have good opportunities to take part in significant group enrichment activities, for example the procedures for school council elections and the Year 8 residential experience at Ullswater.
135. Year 11 students follow a GCSE short course in citizenship. In the few lessons seen, teaching, learning and achievement were good with standards being well above average.

Leadership and management

136. Progress has been made with the introduction of citizenship. However, the limited time allocation constrains development. There is no effective monitoring or evaluation of the citizenship programme and assessment procedures do not give teachers a clear idea of how well students are achieving. Citizenship was not a curriculum subject at the time of the previous inspection.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

Level 3 GCE 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	6	100.0	98.6	83.3	50.2	106.7	87.5
Biology	29	100.0	96.4	55.2	39.2	90.3	78.6
Business studies	28	100.0	98.7	71.4	36.8	103.6	80.1
Chemistry	37	100.0	97.6	67.6	49.0	97.3	84.9
English	26	100.0	99.4	50.0	36.3	86.9	80.9
English literature	36	100.0	99.5	61.1	46.5	94.4	86.5
Design and technology	1	100.0	97.8	0.0	35.0	80.0	77.9
Drama	11	100.0	99.5	27.3	40.1	76.4	83.6
French	14	100.0	98.8	71.4	51.5	94.3	87.6
General studies	113	99.1	94.7	54.9	31.0	89.2	73.1
Geography	9	100.0	98.7	55.6	44.5	88.9	84.0
History	28	100.0	99.0	64.3	44.6	93.6	84.6
Information technology	6	100.0	95.6	16.7	24.6	70.0	69.5
Mathematics	34	100.0	96.7	55.9	55.6	92.4	84.7
Other social studies	25	96.0	97.4	60.0	42.7	88.8	88.8
Physics	15	100.0	96.7	46.7	44.6	84.0	81.7
Religious studies	10	100.0	98.8	90.0	46.7	104.0	104.0
Sociology	12	100.0	98.2	75.0	44.3	95.0	83.6
Spanish	13	100.0	98.3	76.9	50.2	107.7	107.7
Sports studies	3	100.0	98.0	33.3	30.9	93.3	75.2

The school recruits viable numbers for all courses and the retention rate is high for all subjects.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus for this report was on English literature and French, although English language was sampled. The teaching was satisfactory in the English language lesson and students' achievement was satisfactory.

English Literature

Overall, the quality of the provision is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- In some lessons there is an over-reliance on the students' own motivation.

Commentary

Examination results

137. Results at A-level were well above average in 2003 and similar in 2004.

Standards and achievement

138. Students in Years 12 and 13 are confident and articulate at expressing their own independent views about texts. They pose some very challenging questions for the teacher on the texts, demonstrating their level of thinking about the text and their engagement with it. Students also use texts very well as stimulus materials to discuss narrative viewpoint. One weakness in standards is students' confidence in using technical terminology, in both oral and written work.

Teaching and learning

139. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject, and provide a variety of activities that enable the students to learn both independently and co-operatively. As a result most students achieve very well, and there is a high level of interest from students. In lessons where the teaching was not quite as good, there was an over-reliance on the motivation of students to complete and assess work, and as a result the lessons lacked pace, and were unable to stretch students to attain the very highest levels. In most lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm and passion for the subject encouraged the students to engage with the text and develop their own views. Students had particularly good relationships with female members of staff, which allowed them to discuss very sensitive issues.

Leadership and management

140. Good leadership has ensured that standards have improved since the previous inspection. The day-to-day management of the department is efficient. However, there are not effective systems

in place for monitoring the quality of teaching in the department, to ensure greater consistency. There is insufficient use of assessment data to determine priorities in the department.

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	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 previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Teachers have a very good command of their subject, and students are very well prepared for the examination.
- Lower attaining students do not always do as well in speaking as they do in other aspects of the course.

Commentary

Examination results

141. In 2003 results at A-level were above average; results improved considerably in 2004.

Standards and achievement

142. By the end of Year 12, students are achieving very well because they are very well taught and regularly work with authentic French materials. During the year they improve their spoken French by working with the foreign language assistant. Several students enter competitions or do work experience in France, where they can use their spoken language regularly. Lower attaining students, however, do not always do as well in speaking as they do in other aspects of the course. In writing most students express themselves with accuracy and are able to justify their points of view. In Year 13 the students increase the range of areas they feel confident to discuss, which include literature as well as topics such as crime and punishment. The most able demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the relevant facts and a variety of complex structures. Their writing is good and their arguments develop during the course so that they can present their case convincingly and their accuracy improves. Lower attaining students are still mostly accurate but not as adventurous in their use of language. All students have a good knowledge of contemporary France and some of the key figures in public life in French-speaking countries.

Teaching and learning

143. Teachers have a very good command of their subject and students are very well prepared for the examination; teachers know the requirements well and make sure that students know how to get good marks. Teachers conduct lessons almost entirely in French so students develop improved listening skills and learn some accurate pronunciation. Teachers know their students very well and plan their lessons accordingly so that the atmosphere is supportive but challenging; they are given some complicated authentic passages to read and understand. The pace of lessons is very good, resources are well chosen to be topical and interesting, and ICT is

used when possible to give students access to authentic articles so that students learn about current events and the culture of France. Students generally organise their work carefully and use their files well when revising.

144. Teachers encourage students to work independently, for example by giving them a list of tasks that they need to complete, and the sheets where they can record their independent study are monitored periodically by teachers. Students are sometimes given tapes to listen to at home to help them prepare for the examination. Students complete homework diligently and work hard at home to research topics in more depth so that they come to lessons well prepared. Students are aware of what they need to do to improve; they get helpful advice on written work which enables them to write more accurately and at greater length.

Leadership and management

145. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The course content is regularly updated to reflect current issues in France and to ensure it meets the requirements of the examination board. Results have improved since the last inspection and the quality of teaching has remained very good. Examination results are carefully analysed so that any weaknesses are quickly remedied.

MATHEMATICS

The school offers mathematics at AS-level and A-level and it is very rare for a student not to complete the course. The school offers AS and A-level in the areas of pure mathematics, mechanics, decision mathematics and statistics.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	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 previous inspection	Insufficient evidence

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership and management is very good and is leading to improving standards.
- Teaching is very good overall and consequently students are highly motivated and work hard.
- There are very good methods of assessing attainment and monitoring and tracking achievement so that students can see how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.

Examination results

146. In 2003, the results at A-level were above average; results improved significantly in 2004.

Standards and achievement

147. Standards are currently considerably better than those suggested by the examination results in 2003. There was a significant improvement in results in 2004 and the standard of work seen is well above average now. This represents a very good level of achievement. The quality of students' written and oral work is of a high standard and far better than usually seen at this stage in the course. Students make good use of past work when introduced to new topics.

Teaching and learning

148. Teaching is very good overall and students from all ethnic backgrounds learn very well as a result. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of mathematics. This is used to very good effect when questioning students. Teachers give very good support with clear explanations and this allows students to improve their understanding. One of the best features of the teaching is the high expectations that teachers have. They plan their lessons very well and match both questions and content to the high attainment of the students. Students respond well to the challenging level of work and tackle questions with confidence. They have a mature approach to mathematics and are highly motivated. In the better lessons, teachers conduct lessons at a stimulating pace, resulting in rapid gains in knowledge, skills and understanding.

Leadership and management

149. The very good teaching and achievement is the result of the subject having a very good quality of leadership and management with a clear understanding of what is needed for students to succeed at a high level. This is leading to improving standards. There is a very good match of teaching staff to the mathematics curriculum with a diversity of qualities, and effective strategies have been developed to widen teachers' skills further. The wide range of topics within the mathematics curriculum provides students with very good opportunities to study new areas of the subject ensuring that interest and motivation are maintained and extended. There are very good procedures for assessing the students' performance as they progress through the sixth form. The information from assessments is used effectively to measure the achievement of the students and to influence the planning of the curriculum. There is insufficient information in the previous report to make a judgement on progress since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

The focus for this report was on chemistry and physics but biology was also sampled. Teaching in the biology lessons was very good and students are clearly achieving very well.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	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 previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject, its applications, and the syllabus requirements, are very good.
- Lessons are very well planned and require every student to check their own progress and understanding, with opportunities for consolidation.
- The department makes good use of data on students' performance to deduce strengths and weaknesses.

Commentary

Examination results

150. Results at A-level in 2003 were well above the national average. Results for 2004 were similar.

Standards and achievement

151. Students in both Year 12 and Year 13 have much better knowledge and understanding of current topics than usually seen; they are achieving very well. In both year groups, students have well-ordered files containing detailed notes of high quality. Material is cross-referenced between topics so that existing knowledge and understanding can be used quickly and successfully in new contexts. Students have good experimental skills and use ICT very well to process data and write reports.

Teaching and learning

152. Teachers plan lessons very well and use question and answer sessions to check each student's understanding of the topic under study, ensuring that key concepts are understood. Students enjoy lessons, sustain concentration from beginning to end, and appreciate their teachers' very good subject knowledge and the positive atmosphere that derives from very effective teacher-student relationships.

153. Students have to think hard from the very beginning of a lesson and teachers make sure that students are active learners, with a growing focus on independent learning. Teachers set a variety of homework exercises to reinforce and extend students' learning. They mark tests and scrutinise homework regularly, and provide individualised written comments after formal assessment opportunities to help students understand the strengths and weaknesses in their work.

Leadership and management

154. The four teachers work well together as a team and share a commitment to raising standards. Effective use is made of student performance data in lesson planning and target setting. The department is able to identify any areas for development and to take action to overcome them.

155. The previous inspection report describes provision in terms of being average. Since then, results have improved significantly and the quality of teaching is now uniformly very good. Consequently improvement since the last inspection is very good.

Physics

Provision in physics is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	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 previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject, its applications, and the syllabus requirements, are very good.
- Lessons are well planned and use a variety of teaching styles to motivate students.

Commentary

Examination results

156. Results at A-level in 2003 were average when compared with all students nationally, but above average when compared to female students only. In 2004, results showed a significant improvement and were the best in the school.

Standards and achievement

157. Students in both Year 12 and Year 13 have a much better knowledge and understanding of current topics than is usually expected at this stage of the course. In both Years 12 and 13, students have well-ordered files containing detailed notes of high quality. Students have good experimental skills and were seen to go beyond their teacher's introductory brief in order to secure higher quality data.

Teaching and learning

158. Teachers plan lessons very well and use a variety of teaching styles including appropriate use of ICT, always ensuring that key concepts are understood. Students enjoy their lessons, where relationships between teachers and students are characterised by mutual respect and good humour.

159. Students have to think for themselves in lessons and teachers ensure that students are provided with tasks that are challenging but achievable. This is one of the key reasons for students' very good achievement. Teachers set a variety of homework exercises to reinforce and extend students' learning. They mark tests and scrutinise homework regularly, and provide resources, including a CD, for students that support independent learning.

Leadership and management

160. The teachers work well together as a team and make good use of data about students' performance in planning lessons and setting targets. The department was able to identify areas for development arising from the 2003 examination results and take very effective action to raise standards markedly in 2004. Physics was broadly average at the time of the previous inspection. Since then, results have improved significantly and the quality of teaching is now uniformly very good. As a result, improvement since the last inspection is very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

No courses were inspected in this area.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focused on history, but geography, religious education, psychology and sociology were sampled. Teaching is good in each of the latter two subjects and students are doing well. Students are achieving very well in geography and religious education, as a result of very good teaching.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	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 previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average as a result of very good teaching.
- Students' very good attitudes to learning lead to them achieving very well in examinations.
- The quality of leadership is very good and gives clear vision and direction.
- More could be done to improve links with higher education.

Commentary

Examination results

161. Results in the 2003 A-level examination were well above average. The results were similar in 2004.

Standards and achievement

162. By the end of Year 13 students have acquired depth in knowledge and understanding of topics, and use a wide range of evidence to analyse and evaluate past events. Higher attaining students are able to critically analyse and interpret written sources very well indeed. Students make very good progress in using sources of evidence to evaluate financial issues, and acquire a wide range of terms, using them in appropriate contexts. Occasionally, a student will not confidently recall knowledge in discussion, written responses are generalised and evidence is insufficiently evaluated. On the whole, however, students are achieving very well.

Teaching and learning

163. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and it leads to students achieving well above average standards. Lessons are well prepared and structured to ensure that students are constantly challenged to be critically aware of issues and develop ideas. On some occasions, however, students are not made to engage enough in class discussion. Students enjoy learning; they listen carefully and know what is expected in effort and application to study. They use time well and increasingly become self-reliant, particularly in meeting homework tasks. Teachers place emphasis on developing students' literacy skills and give guidance on how to structure answers. As a result writing improves in clarity and relevance.

Leadership and management

164. The head of department has a clear vision about the future development needs of the subject and has identified priorities to achieve them. Planning is linked to whole-school issues, but success criteria are too general. There is an annual review of the department's work, particularly the analysis of results, and it leads to the setting of improvement targets. Links with higher educational institutions, however, are under-developed. Since the previous inspection results have risen significantly.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

The focus for the inspection was the product design course.

Provision in product design is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership has enabled the course to be brought 'in house' and results have improved significantly.
- Students' design portfolios are extensive but lack creativity.
- Students have insufficient access to CAD/CAM facilities, which restricts their achievement.
- Teachers lack experience of high quality work.

Examination results

165. Only one student studied to full A-level in 2003; results in 2004 were similar to the 2003 national average. In 2004, results at AS-level improved significantly. Those who studied for A-level in 2003 and 2004 were taught through the consortium arrangements and not by staff at the school. The 2004 AS-level results were achieved by students taught by the school staff.

Standards and achievement

166. Students demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of manufacturing processes. They are highly articulate but do not use the technical language of the subject when describing product analysis techniques. Students' design work is thorough but lacks creativity. Product evaluation is above average, with students often carrying out extensive physical testing of products. Students have above average design skills but do not always pay enough attention to design details that enhance the quality of the products they create. Students know how designs can be influenced but do not always make sufficient reference to the work of famous designers. Students make effective use of ICT to present work but only make limited use of CAD/CAM in the production of their products. The students join the course with average levels of attainment for A-level students; their standards at the end of their courses are also average, reflecting satisfactory achievement.

Teaching and learning

167. Teachers are relatively new to the course. Whilst they have a sound knowledge of the examination syllabus, they lack experience of what constitutes high quality work, the result of which is that students produce work that is of an average standard. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and students gain in confidence. However, teachers miss opportunities to engage students in detailed debate about the wonders of design and do not widen students' understanding of design. Teachers do not always match tasks so as to challenge individuals to attain the very highest standards.

Leadership and management

168. Whilst this area operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis, there have been many difficulties in recent years. The head of department analysed why students were underachieving and took action to move the course to Sutton Girl's Grammar School. This has resulted in much improved AS-level results in 2004, but students did not do as well as they should have in previous years and actions were not taken quickly enough to address the problems. Product design was not taught at the time of the previous inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The inspection focused on theatre studies, although art and design was sampled. Teaching was very good in the art and design lesson and students were achieving very well.

Theatre studies

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

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results in 2004 were significantly better than those in 2003.
- The teacher's very good subject knowledge helps students learn very rapidly.
- Excellent relationships in lessons lead to very good achievement.
- In essays, students do not focus sharply enough on the set topic.

Commentary

Examination results

169. Examination results at A-level in 2003 were below average; in 2004, they improved dramatically to well above the 2003 national average.

Standards and achievement

170. Theatre studies is a new subject for students, none of whom have a GCSE in the subject. In Year 13, the four students work well as a group and in pairs when improvising. Although lacking in imagination, they use space well, know the importance of body language in creating atmosphere, and gain in self-confidence. Their work has significantly improved since the start of Year 12. Essays on texts are well structured, but move away from the set topic and concentrate on plot rather than on stage design and direction. The current Year 12 students have made an impressive start. They read play scripts fluently and with understanding, showing clear appreciation of character.

Teaching and learning

171. The teacher has very good subject knowledge, which enables her to assist students in raising their standards of performance. Lessons are well planned, with varied activities that focus students on what they need to do to achieve their best. The teacher's enthusiasm and her excellent relationship with students explain why students learn so well and speak very positively about the subject. Marking is very good. Comments tell students how to improve their work through the use of design sketches and concentration on the set topic.

Leadership and management

172. Schemes of work are very good and swift action is taken to help students overcome difficulties. Standards at A-level have risen very significantly in the past year. Progress since the last inspection cannot be judged, as the subject was not taught then.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subjects were inspected in this area.

BUSINESS

Business studies

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

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Monitoring of students' progress is particularly good.
- Teachers use their knowledge of individual students very well to ensure all achieve very well.

Commentary

Examination results

173. Results at A-level were well above the national average in 2003 and were similar in 2004.

Standards and achievement

174. Students in both Years 12 and 13 demonstrate a clear understanding of key business concepts. They confidently and accurately use a wide range of business terminology; using terms precisely and not confusing such similar terms as cost, price and value. They apply what they have learned very well to case studies, local organisations and the real economy. They analyse the information that they collect, draw conclusions and make predictions. Year 13 students display highly developed speaking and listening skills when arguing for and against worker participation and they could use appropriate business terminology both confidently and accurately.

Teaching and learning

175. Students are always made aware of lesson objectives. Activities are suitably challenging for all students. Teachers know their students very well and cater for their differing individual needs. They encourage and engage students skilfully, constantly challenging them. Lessons are tightly planned and highly organised; time is never wasted. Research, analysis and evaluation skills are highly developed through a wide variety of planned activities and systematic assessment. As a result of very careful monitoring and evaluation all students in Years 12 and 13 are achieving very well.

Leadership and management

176. The head of department skilfully leads the staff and manages the department very well. The head of department carefully analyses course results in order to refine and plan for the future. All weaknesses from the previous inspection have been dealt with and teaching has improved.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

177. No subjects were inspected in this area.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	2	2
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	2
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	1	1
Overall standards achieved		2
Students' achievement	2	2
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)		2
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
The quality of education provided by the school		2
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	5	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	2	2
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	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).