

INSPECTION REPORT

THE CAMDEN SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

London

LEA area: Camden

Unique reference number: 100054

Headteacher: Ms A Canning

Lead inspector: Mr R Passant

Dates of inspection: 28 February – 3 March 2005

Inspection number: 268955

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils: Girls
Number on roll: 981

School address: Sandall Road
London
Postcode: NW5 2DB

Telephone number: 0207 4853 414
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Ms P Wild

Date of previous inspection: 26 April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a comprehensive 11 to 18 girls' school. The mixed sixth form takes in students from other schools. There are 561 girls in the main school and 420 male and female students in the sixth form. Ethnically it is very diverse. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not or believed not to be English is very high. The most common first languages spoken by pupils, other than English, are Bengali, Greek and Somali. There are a significant number of refugees and asylum seekers, the largest groups from Somalia and Kosovo but also from 20 other countries. The percentage of pupils identified as having special needs, including statements, is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is above the national average. The major educational needs are specific and moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupil mobility is low. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (30.6 per cent) is above the national average. The school is genuinely comprehensive and serves the immediate locality in Camden. Both these aspects are ensured by the school's admission procedures. Five places at admissions are given to pupils with particular musical ability and aptitude. Attainment on entry is broadly average. The school has had three school achievement awards, the last in 2002 and has been twice identified as a particularly successful school by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. The school has a very good reputation.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2728	Rod Passant	Lead inspector	Drama (sixth form)
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23588	Charanjit Ajitsingh	Team inspector	English as an additional language History History (sixth form)
30545	David Castell	Team inspector	Geography Geography (sixth form)
32805	Richard Churches	Team inspector	Music Music (sixth form)
33525	Pam Fearnley	Team inspector	Science Biology (sixth form)
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Citizenship Religious education Citizenship Religious education (sixth form)
31685	Valerie Girling	Team inspector	Art and design Art and design (sixth form)
27240	William Hooper	Team inspector	Classical studies (sixth form) Latin (sixth form)
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	Special educational needs
15051	Lynne Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology Design and technology (sixth form) Work related learning
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	Business education (sixth form)
20215	Janet Mellor	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French (sixth form) Modern foreign languages (sixth form)
10782	Henry Moreton	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)
35086	Janet Morrison	Team inspector	English English (sixth form)
33125	Judith Trevorrow	Team inspector	Physical education
33727	Nick Vinall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Information and communication technology (sixth form)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Camden School for Girls is a very good school with excellent features. The school has a deservedly high reputation. Pupils achieve very well and attain high standards. The school's ethos is excellent. It promotes excellent attitudes to learning and the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The strength of the school lies in its focus on the needs of the individual, the nurturing of their confidence and the provision of appropriate support and challenge for pupils to achieve their best. Expectations are high. Teaching is, overall, very good. Members of staff are very committed and work very hard on behalf of pupils. Relationships with pupils are very good. There are very good links with the community. Leadership by the headteacher is excellent. The school evaluates its performance carefully and takes very effective action if required.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher is very effectively supported by the senior leadership team. Overall, leadership and management are very good. There is a very strong collegiate ethos
- The pupils are very impressive in the way that they talk about the school and express their commitment to it. They display self-confidence without arrogance, a very strong awareness of their being within a community, which has, over time, been the means by which others have achieved their aspirations, and the sense of personal responsibility that they gain from this. They also develop a very strong sense of their potential to contribute to the wider world. The school's ethos and work ethic are excellent. Talking to a group of senior pupils gives a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school
- Teaching is, overall, very good. Founded on high quality of relationships, teachers listen with genuine interest to what pupils have to say and because of their very good subject knowledge are able to respond with confidence. There is a sustained focus on developing high quality of language both written and orally. All share a properly professional but nevertheless deep commitment to the pupils
- The quality of support given to pupils is very good. Pupils are tracked carefully and there is a network of formal and informal provision. The school is very inclusive. It works hard to meet the needs of individuals by personalising their educational experience. There are one or two pupils who are at risk. The school has a clear commitment to these pupils but establishing effective support for them with outside agencies is not always easy
- There are strengths in the curriculum, but there are some aspects which cause discontinuity to learning, and the school's planned review of the curriculum is timely
- The school has made significant improvements to the resources and accommodation, which have significantly contributed to the quality of learning taking place. There are still areas of the school where accommodation and lack of ICT resources need to be improved

There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen. There have been two building programmes and significant investment in ICT and improved financial systems. The school provides at least good value for money.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Standards at GCSE have been well above average for some years and the trend for improvement is broadly in line with the national trend. Pupils made well above average progress from Year 9 to their GCSE results as indicated by the value added using data matched to pupils. Standards in English and science are significantly above the national average. Standards in mathematics are above the national average. All pupils gained a GCSE pass in English and mathematics. Pupils are competent in their ICT skills. **Overall, pupils achieve very well.** In Year 9 tests, the school has maintained overall well-above average standards for the past four years. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. By Year 9, pupils achieve very well in English and science, art and music and well in other subjects, attaining standards that are, usually, above average. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 have good ICT skills and achieve well. Pupils' ICT skills in Year 9 are satisfactory but have been limited by their experience with the previously unsatisfactory computer resources. Overall, pupils with special educational needs achieve very well, as do pupils with English as an additional language. Higher-attaining pupils do particularly well. Pupils from specific ethnic groups outperform the borough average. The progress of pupils in public care is tracked carefully.

Standards of behaviour are very good. Almost all of the pupils behave in an exemplary fashion for almost all of the time. A small number of pupils are identified as having emotional and behavioural needs; they make very good progress. **Pupils' attitudes are excellent.** Pupils are very self-motivated. **The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.** Attendance is satisfactory. Procedures to improve attendance are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. High expectations, very good relationships and very good subject knowledge underpin the learning. There is a good range of curricular opportunities - very good in the sixth form – and this is enhanced by very good enrichment, aspects of which are outstanding. The provision for pupils' care, welfare and health and safety is excellent and there are very good links with the parents and community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. Governance is very good. The governors are very principled, committed and supportive of the school and monitor its work closely. The chair of governors works extremely hard on behalf of the school. The governors are not meeting the legal requirement to provide a collective act of worship, although they place emphasis on assemblies, religious education and pupils' spiritual development. Leadership and management by the headteacher are excellent. The headteacher is supported by a very effective leadership and management team. There is a strong collegiate ethos.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are highly satisfied with the school and there is a very effective partnership. Pupils are very proud of the school. They express loyalty to the community of the school and emphasised, over and over again in their responses, the trust that they have in their teachers and their friendliness.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Review the curriculum including time allocations to subject areas as planned by the school and within its planned timescale
- Improve aspects of the accommodation and ICT resources
- In consultation and association with the LEA identify an external lead professional to co-ordinate and assist in inter-agency support for girls at risk

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure assemblies comply with the requirements for collective worship or are held in accordance with the requirements of a determination from the local SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education)

OVERALL EVALUATION

Camden School has a very good sixth form with excellent features. There are 424 students in this mixed sixth form, of which well over half – including 134 boys – joined the school in Year 12. Reflecting local demographics, the sixth form is both ethnically and culturally diverse, and over 30 different languages are spoken. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Teaching is very good overall, resulting in very good achievement and well above average examination results. Approximately 99 per cent of students gain higher education places each year. A wide curriculum choice is available and this is extended through collaboration with a consortium of three other local schools and a local college. The curriculum opportunities for enrichment are exceptional and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is catered for extremely well. The sixth form is very effectively led and managed.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The sixth form is a dynamic and intellectually ambitious community. Students are innovative and show commendable independence of thought; they thrive on debate and take their social responsibilities seriously
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have a strong command of their subjects and show significant skill and commitment in developing students' enthusiasm for learning
- Students demonstrate maturity and creativity in their approach to knowledge and ideas; their excellent attitudes contribute very well to their overall attainment and the excellent ethos of the school
- Sixth form leaders are energetic in their approach and committed to challenging and inspiring students through an excellent enrichment programme and a very impressive range of educational activities
- Beginning with a highly successful induction programme, students' academic and personal development is exceptionally well supported. The quality of careers and higher education guidance is excellent
- There is insufficient space available for quiet study and students lack access to computers for independent research

There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Funding is used in a cost-effective way to give students a very good quality of teaching and excellent educational experience.

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	English: Very Good. Standards in English are high and well above national expectations. Teachers have expert subject knowledge and understand well how students learn. Students' achievement is very good, through their analytical skills and ability to work independently and collaboratively. Literary terminology is well taught and students are wide and critical readers.
Mathematics	French: Very Good. Standards are very good and examination results are very high. Teaching and learning are very good. Students work hard, develop high levels of fluency and are committed and well motivated. Standards of work seen Good. A significant proportion of students achieve the highest A/R grades. Standards rose significantly in 2004
Science	Biology: Excellent. Teachers' subject expertise and their high expectations make teaching and learning very good, and results in very good achievement. Leadership and management of the
Information and communication	Good. Good teaching and learning enable students to achieve well. Standards on entry are below average.

technology

Curriculum area

Evaluation

Humanities

History: Very Good. Results in examinations are very good. Students achieve very well because of consistently good or better teaching.

Geography: Very Good. Very good teaching and high levels of support mean that students develop well as independent learners. Students achieve very well and standards in Year 13 are above average.

Religious studies: Very Good. Standards are well above

Engineering, technology and manufacturing

Product design: Excellent. Teaching and learning drive students to very high achievement because they are challenged to use higher order thinking and planning skills for ambitious

Visual and performing arts and media

Music: Excellent. A combination of inspirational leadership, outstanding resources and excellent subject knowledge contribute to excellent teaching. Prior attainment in examinations is above expectations, however current work is well above expectations. Students benefit from an outstanding range of extra-curricular opportunities and many performances of a very high standard.

Art and design: Excellent. Standards are high and students achieve very well because of very good teaching.

Theatre studies: Very Good. Students attain high standards

Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel

Not inspected in the sixth form.

Business

AVCE Business Studies: Satisfactory. Standards are below average. Students benefit from good support with language skills and from good links with local business. Achievement is

Health and social care

Not inspected in the sixth form.

General education

Not inspected in the sixth form.

The curriculum areas are broadly common 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

Students receive excellent support and guidance from their teachers and sixth form managers, who know them very well. Excellent procedures introduce students, including those joining from other institutions, to the requirements and expectations of the sixth form. Students' progress is regularly monitored, ensuring they know how well they are doing and leading to very good guidance on how to improve. Selected students benefit from the astute guidance of highly qualified learning mentors, which enables them to improve their performance. The provision for careers education is exceptional and students receive excellent support with their higher education applications.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is very well led and managed. The head of sixth form provides very good leadership and has overseen the continued improvement of an already highly successful sixth form. She receives very good support from an energetic leadership team. Overall, sixth form leaders and managers have very high aspirations for all students and are committed to maintaining and improving the quality of sixth form education the school offers.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very positive indeed about the sixth form. They are particularly appreciative of the way in which the sixth form is organised and managed, the quality of teaching, the full range of activities on offer and the high level of support and guidance that they receive.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils achieve very well overall and attain standards which are well above average at GCSE.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make well above average progress from Year 7 to Year 11 compared to schools nationally
- Higher-attaining pupils achieve particularly well
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve, overall, very well as do pupils with English as an additional language

Commentary

1. Attainment on entry to the school reflects the school's genuinely comprehensive nature and the balanced banded intake. Overall, attainment on entry to the school is average. Pupils achieve well and attain, overall, well above average attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9. Standards in these tests are well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Compared to similar schools – that is schools which have a similar overall attainment on entry – standards are high in English (in the top five per cent of schools), above average in science and average in mathematics. The school has maintained, overall, well above average standards for the past four years. The target setting process is established well and increasingly demanding. Results in the tests show steady overall improvement. The school's analysis of the relative progress compared to schools nationally – the valued added measure – indicates that the progress pupils make is well above average.
2. Pupils achieve very well in English and science, art and music; they achieve well in other subjects, attaining standards that are, usually, above average. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 have good ICT skills and achieve well. Pupils' ICT skills in Year 9 are satisfactory but have been limited by their experience with the previous unsatisfactory computer resources. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	38.4 (35.7)	33.3 (33.4)
mathematics	37.2 (36.5)	35.5 (35.4)
science	35.8 (35.8)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 111 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Standards at GCSE have been well above average for some years and the trend for improvement is broadly in line with the national trend. Demanding targets are set, but in 2004 the school just missed its targets for the proportion of pupils gaining five A* to C grades but exceeded in the overall average point score. Pupils made well above average progress from Year 9 to their GCSE results as indicated by the value added using data matched to pupils. The overall progress from their Year 6 test results in primary school to their GCSE results was also well above average. Standards in English are significantly above the national average with nearly a half of pupils gaining A* or A grades in English language and a third gaining similar high grades in English literature. Standards in mathematics are above the national

average with just under a quarter gaining A* or A grades. All pupils gained a GCSE pass in English and mathematics. Standards in science are significantly above the national average. Pupils are competent in their ICT skills. Pupils achieve very well in their GCSE years.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	73 (73)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98 (96)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	44.9 (42.7)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 111 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Higher attaining pupils do particularly well in the school because of the school's gifted and talented programme. Their achievement in the lower school (Years 7 to 9) is very good and it is excellent in Years 10 and 11. The proportion of pupils gaining A* in their GCSE examinations is three times above the national average for girls. There is a marked acceleration in these pupils' achievement throughout the school.
5. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall in the lower school, and very good progress in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. Overall, they achieve very well. The overall attainment of pupils with special educational needs is generally below national expectations. Pupils with statements achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
6. Most pupils who learn English as an additional language achieve as well as native speakers of English and in many cases better because they have achieved a higher level of academic and English language proficiency. Those pupils at the early stages of learning English make good progress in relation to their prior learning and achieve well. Those who have had no exposure to subject specific vocabulary and related questions, as seen in the sixth form Business Studies course, find it a struggle and make slower progress, although the school has made small provision of help for them.
7. Pupils eligible for free school meals perform below the school's average. The school's and the LEA's analysis by ethnic group indicates that all pupils are performing above the borough average. Great care needs to be taken in interpreting the results because the numbers in a particular ethnic group are often very small and the performance of an individual pupil can make a significant difference. The one group that tends to perform below the school's average is a sub-group of white UK girls who require significant school support.

Sixth form

8. Following an established pattern, the school's results were well above the national median for all sixth forms in 2004. One hundred and seventy nine Year 13 students sat the equivalent of 3.3 A levels each. Their pass rates were 99 per cent for A level, and 96 per cent for AS level. The average point score per student was 306, as compared to 289 in 2003. A new scoring system has been introduced to cover all accreditations that students of this age may gain with the result that the average point score appears larger than before. This broad benchmark masks the increase in the proportion of students at the school gaining grades A and B at A level, which rose from 52 per cent in 2003, to 62 per cent in 2004. In 2004, 59 students

attained 360 points or more – the equivalent of 3 A grades, as compared to 43 students in 2003. In both years, the performance of females was marginally stronger than that of males. In terms of value added, students achieved grades that were in line with those predicted, based on their prior attainment.

9. Standards of attainment on entry to the sixth form are well above the national average. In the lessons observed and in the samples of work scrutinized, overall achievement was very good and the majority of students were reaching well above average standards. In 80 per cent of lessons seen, students made good or very good gains in learning and progress was never less than satisfactory.
10. There are 38 students with special educational needs in the sixth form, including one with a statement. Overall, these students make the same rate of progress as their peers.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	98.5 (97.7)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	62.4 (50.3)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	298.1 (290.7)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 198 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

11. There are a number of complex and interrelating factors, which account for pupils' overall very good achievement – particularly in the main school. A number of these factors were identified in the previous report and they still hold true and provide the foundation for the very good improvement that has taken place since then.
12. That report concluded that, 'Camden School for Girls is a unique and very effective school in many ways. Its strong traditions defined its purpose and direction and provide a cornerstone for its very positive ethos. Indeed the sense of tradition and continuity, and the way this was used to plan its future is particularly effective in both giving pupils a high standard of education and enabling them to play a responsible role in modern society. This commitment and determination to promote high quality education for women encapsulates the school's ethos. Its success in achieving high standards is reflected in its commitment to a broad and stimulating curriculum for all pupils, to positive relationships and to an effective learning environment.'
13. Key factors are:
 - The genuinely comprehensive nature of the school
 - The relatively small size of the main school is used particularly well so that individual pupils are known and valued
 - The strong sense of tradition deriving from its secular foundation and commitment to women's education
 - The commitment and considerable expertise of staff – for some members of staff the commitment is over a significant period of time – reinforcing the sense of tradition
 - The high quality relationships which exist between staff and which are pupils and reflected in the collegiate nature of the school
 - The strong reputation that the school has and the resultant pride pupils have in being identified with the school
 - The very strong work ethic and excellent ethos
 - Very good teaching coupled with very good enrichment opportunities
 - High expectations matched by high levels of support to ensure that pupils find areas of strength and the provision of many opportunities to succeed
 - The rigour with which teachers address language development and the independence of learning fostered across the school

14. The comprehensive nature of the school in relation to attainment is an important feature. There is a balance in ability profile so that one group does not dominate but is sufficiently counterbalanced. The school does not have a skewed profile that makes it hard to raise the aspirations of the majority and it does have a big enough group of higher attaining pupils to ensure that they challenge each other. The school is extremely inclusive and gains much from its diversity.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Behaviour is very good. Pupils' attitudes are excellent. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Attendance is satisfactory. The school's procedures to improve attendance are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is skilled at identifying and building up individual strengths. Fostering of self-esteem and individuality is fundamental to the school's philosophy
- Pupils are clear that any problem is handled swiftly and effectively by the school
- The school is excellent in fostering pupils' commitment to the school ethos and values

Commentary

15. Pupils' behaviour is, overall, very good. Most pupils behave in an exemplary fashion for most of the time. There are a small number of pupils who are identified as having specific behavioural needs but they are given very good support and most make very good progress in their behaviour over time. The school tracks behaviour carefully and uses a school-wide system to foster good behaviour. Praise and encouragement are used particularly effectively. The school very effectively establishes its own values and ethos and works very hard to keep at bay the more obvious examples of antisocial behaviour modelled within the immediate neighbourhood.
16. Pupils' attitudes, both to learning and to each other, are excellent. Pupils were very clear that if there were any problems between pupils the school would act very quickly and effectively. Anti-bullying is a strong underlying theme in the personal, social and health education programme. Parents at the inspection meeting praised the school's policy of zero tolerance and said that isolated incidences of bullying were generally handled exceptionally well. There was general agreement that the school was inclusive. Parents said that teachers do not ridicule children and model respect. On the contrary, said one parent, 'The school keeps on telling pupils how good they are at things'. This consistent reinforcement, finding aspects of individual strength, seems to be a fundamental element in the school's success. It rubs off on the pupils too – a parent was impressed how her daughter constantly pointed out, with generosity, what other girls were good at, rather than making judgements about what others could not do. Examples were cited of the school 'transforming' the lives of individual pupils through correct diagnosis of special educational needs and support for low achievers.
17. There is careful induction to the school. Pupils are aware of the school's reputation and its expectations are made explicit. Pupils are encouraged – so they said – to speak up, to have the confidence that their viewpoint will be valued. A strength of the school, and it is a considerable one, is that the school nurtures pupils' confidence, sense of self-esteem and independence. Pupils felt that their individuality and independence were recognised and developed. They valued the non-uniform as an expression of their individuality. Parents described the school as being a 'happy' place and a 'nurturing' school. Teachers listen; they ask questions and are genuine in their interest in the replies that they get. It was evident that pupils are valued for their ideas and the independence of their ideas. Pupils are taught to listen carefully to one another, to build upon an idea, to shape and refine through discussion.

There is a secure, trusting framework established in lessons. Pupils are taught to be reflective with the result that they can make a profound, sensitive observation in a lesson, without fear of ridicule. The school is very strongly collaborative. It is competitive but is not in the process of doing others down. The competition, which is mostly developed, is competing with yourself; the athletic concept of achieving a personal best is channelled into academic work. Whilst the school is organised horizontally in year groups with year heads and year tutors there is a strong sense, among the pupils, of the vertical nature of the school. Because pupils come from the immediate locality, they know each other and know that age is not such a barrier. In a formal meeting held with pupils, they stressed that younger pupils' ideas were not dismissed just because they were younger. There is a strong vertical thread of friendship, acquaintance and very importantly, role models, which reinforce the high expectations. This is further strengthened by the formal and, indeed, informal 'buddy' systems established within the school, for example, the mentoring roles of the sixth form and prefects.

18. Whilst fully recognising the school's history and sense of tradition and its commitment over a long period of time to women's education and indeed the particular contribution this makes to the school's ethos, perhaps more important is the impact that this has on pupils. One pupil articulately expressed the view – endorsed by others – that you quickly became aware that the school was the means by which former pupils had achieved their aspirations and, as a result, there was a personal sense of responsibility for you to do the same. This is reinforced by the school by its invitations to former alumni, often leaders in their chosen profession, to speak to the pupils about their work. Pupils spoke with pride about the kindness and generosity of former pupils and their continuing commitment to the school.
19. Another couple of pupils pointed out that you 'committed' yourself to Camden School for Girls – its aims and aspirations – but you were not made to make this commitment. Clearly, what the school is so very successful at is providing the framework, the expectations for pupils, the opportunity for them to identify with these aspirations, and, crucially, to develop their own. Pupils themselves identify their own ambitions and come to the decision to set out to seek to meet them. Crucially, pupils write their own contract, they make the decision; they are not forced to learn but want to. The school is highly skilled at unlocking pupils' energies, of developing genuine and committed self-motivation. Pupils' excellent attitudes are of fundamental importance in pupils' overall very good achievement.
20. This is not achieved, it should be stressed, by chance but through a clear and firm framework of routines, by high expectations consistently reinforced by very good teaching, by learning that is both fun and challenging and the provision of multiple opportunities to develop personal success. There is also another element at work which perhaps can be best described as a collective wisdom which recognises, again as a pupil identified, 'that you will have your ups and downs – that is what being an adolescent girl is all about...' What the school does, so effectively, it would seem, is provide support for the 'downs' and praise for the 'ups'. Another girl felt that the school was not petty; it did not pick up on small, unimportant things. These views are echoed by parents – they felt that the school takes a 'long view', it provides space and has the confidence of proven optimism which allows the synergy of pupils' attitudes to influence the minority who have yet to make the commitment to the school. Members of staff talk with pride about the range of depth of the friendships formed by pupils. Outside the school, there is a polarised provision of social circumstances; a strength of the school, felt deeply by staff, is that within it, pupils' friendships transcend social circumstances and all pupils gain from the rich and diverse experience.
21. The provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school is highly inclusive and pupils value its diversity and are very sensitive to cultural heritage, both their own and the heritage of others. What emerges from the amalgam of school provision, with the opportunity to reflect on their lives and the lives of others, the high level of overall enrichment, along with the camaraderie, support and peer pressure of pupils, is a sense of personal commitment to engage with the world and to contribute to it. High level of debate, reading, literature, the arts, humanities, mathematics and science are not studied in isolation but as part of an awareness of internationalism, global and local issues lead to a

willingness to engage with these and other moral issues. The school is particularly effective at not only developing the academic skills but also developing a sense of personal responsibility to use these skills, and not simply for oneself: and this too becomes part of the virtuous circle of raising attainment. The school is a secular foundation but has an ethos, tangible on a first visit, akin to that of a faith school. It fosters very successfully, engagement, compassion, hard work and personal responsibility within an open collegiate friendliness. The school provides the security to allow it to be honest in its exploration of sensitive and real issues. Pupil and student questionnaires are very positive. This loyalty to the community of the school and, emphasised over and over again in their responses, the trust that they have in their teachers and their friendliness indicate an integrity and consistency of approach.

22. Pupils described how they can always recognise a Camden girl when out and about. When challenged how they could possibly do this when there is no uniform to identify them they replied 'by their values - their kindness, their courtesy...'

Attendance

Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's action to promote attendance is very good
- The efforts of most parents and carers to ensure the attendance of their children are good

Commentary

23. Attendance is satisfactory. It is broadly in line with schools nationally. Punctuality for school and lessons is also satisfactory. The higher than usual authorised absences are mainly due to sickness and a small number of parents who take family holidays during term time. However, the majority of parents are very co-operative in ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually. The school links very well with the educational social worker in a rigorous monitoring of attendance. Punctuality continues to be an area for development since the previous inspection.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.1	School data	0.7
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
512	23	0
3	1	0

White – any other White background	147	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	34	5	0
Mixed – White and Black African	9	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	14	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	14	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	91	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	23	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	1	0
Black or Black British – African	67	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	8	0	0
Chinese	21	0	0
Any other ethnic group	19	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	13	0	0

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

24. Short-term exclusion is used as an extreme measure, essentially to involve parents in order to devise a common approach.

Sixth form

25. Students' attitudes to the school are very positive. In discussion, students identified very closely with the sixth form, many highlighting the very high levels of support and guidance received from teachers and sixth form managers, the quality of teaching and the outstanding range of enrichment opportunities. Students interviewed spoke of the enjoyment they derived from their time in the sixth form, the strong sense of community and the excellent emphasis placed by sixth form leaders on widening opportunities and raising individual aspirations.
26. Overall, the exceptional levels of support offered by sixth form managers and teachers play a significant part in helping students to enhance their personal learning skills. The school recognises the need to uphold a strong work ethic and monitors the progress of each student closely. All students are helped to assume effective study habits. Where appropriate, individual students receive support from highly qualified learning mentors. Supervised drop-in study sessions are also run for those with weaker organisational skills.
27. The sixth form accommodation, which is set apart from the main school, is of a high standard but it does not include adequate space for quiet study to enable all students to work comfortably and productively during school hours. Students also expressed concern at the shortage of ICT in the school and said that they had difficulty in undertaking independent research on the internet because of the lack of accessible computers. The school recognises that the main school library is an inadequate study area for sixth form purposes.
28. The sixth form is a very well organised area with an excellent ethos. The efforts made to extend the boundaries of knowledge and understanding through links with the community and institutions of higher education are exceptional. Sixth form managers encourage students to participate at a wide range of conferences and to attend university seminars and summer

schools. The international dimension of sixth form life is explicit and is enhanced by regular visits abroad. Last year, students taking courses in technology, photography and art went to New York; students of English and history went to France, whilst the sixth form musicians visited Bruges. The school has developed a unique range of partnerships in the community by drawing from the impressive array of skills possessed by former students, parents and friends of the school.

29. The personal development of students is excellent. Students may choose to assume responsibilities and to contribute to activities in the school at large. Those who wish to be prefects volunteer to undertake this responsibility. Senior prefects receive a day's leadership training, which is consolidated by a weekend on a residential activity to foster good teamwork. As part of the community service programme, some sixth formers are involved in supporting main school lessons or are appointed to assist younger pupils with their reading. Others mentor new pupils to the school, supervise in the library or run clubs. Students are actively encouraged to voice their opinions and to initiate ideas, either in discussion with sixth form managers or more formally through the sixth form council that meets weekly. A student-run, lunchtime Judaism club gave evidence of the mature and considered approach that students take when expressing their views.
30. Opportunities to take part in charity work are varied and reflect the concerns of individual students as well as staff. During the inspection week, students were very actively running a Fair Trade stall. Their short-term fund-raising plans included a Caribbean evening to raise money for the victims of a recent hurricane disaster, a Tsunami appeal international evening and activities for *Comic Relief*. Long-standing charity work has taken place with the *Marie Curie Foundation*, *Crisis at Christmas* and *Amnesty International*. The active social conscience exhibited by the students led to their involvement in a recent question and answer session with an HIV positive woman that was filmed by the BBC.
31. Social events are arranged throughout the year and include a sixth form revue and formal contribution to Founder's Day. Sixth formers contribute with enthusiasm to concerts, productions and other school events. Individual sixth form students have recently represented the UK at basketball, and taken part in the National Youth Theatre and the London Schools Symphony Orchestra.
32. Students relate very well to one another and work co-operatively in a spirit of mutual endeavour. The highly supportive quality of sixth form life helps to nurture self-esteem and personal ambition. Students are excellent ambassadors for the school and provide very good role models for younger pupils in their support of the school ethos. In the school at large, they are friendly, purposeful and vibrant.
33. Students value their school and those that have recently moved from other schools are among its most ardent exponents. Beginning with a residential week in Devon, the quality of the induction programme is outstanding and external students are integrated so successfully that they are prepared to volunteer to become prefects within weeks of joining the school. In the summer term of Year 12, students benefit from a very well designed two-day induction programme for entry to Year 13.
34. The school is developing a range of strategies to improve levels of attendance, which include wake-up calls directly from sixth form mentors.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. There is a good range of curricular opportunities - very good in the sixth form and this is enhanced by very good enrichment with aspects that are outstanding. The overall provision for

pupils' care, welfare and health and safety is excellent and there are very good links with the parents and community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is very good and assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of relationships between staff and pupils underpins the learning
- The school provides multiple opportunities for pupils to succeed
- Pupils are known and valued
- There is uncompromising rigour in the expectation and use of language
- Overall staff manage the additional needs of pupils very well
- Homework is well used to develop pupils' independent learning skills
- Assessment is used well

Commentary

35. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good and accounts for the overall very good achievement and standards seen. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good across the rest of the school. Good or better teaching was seen in all subjects across the school. The very small number of unsatisfactory lessons seen in the sample were the result of professional misjudgement. Teachers are skilled at classroom management and adopted approaches recommended by national strategies well. They are skilled practitioners. There are, however, specific attributes that account for the very good achievement at the school.
36. The previous section identified how the school developed pupils' excellent attitudes and unlocked their self-motivation. It stressed that this was not achieved by chance, but through a clear and firm framework of routines, by high expectations consistently reinforced by very good teaching, by learning that is both fun and challenging and the provision of multiple opportunities to develop personal success. Above all the excellent trusting relationships with staff underpin pupils' learning. These are key ingredients that underpin the very good teaching. There are six others.
37. Firstly, the school uses its relatively small size well. Pupils are known individually. Members of staff are aware of their needs. Not only do they foster the pupils' individuality and independence but also they provide effective support. As a staff too, they are aware of the climate and culture and the pressures that the youngsters face as they grow up. Planning for their needs is generally very effective.
38. Secondly, there is an uncompromising demand and rigour in the application of language development across the school. Pupils are not allowed sloppiness in their oral or written expression but precision of language and thought is expected. Teachers are very good listeners. Their very good subject knowledge provides them with the necessary confidence to use pupils' answers, to make connections and to draw on the pupils' experience. Skilled questioning lies at the heart of this. Questions are used not simply to check facts but often throw the onus back on the pupil, to reflect, to see another viewpoint, to recapitulate the argument so far. Teachers also model the use of language very effectively as they model an approach to thinking about a subject and thinking through a problem. New vocabulary is introduced effectively. There is significant emphasis on debate and discussion, of brainstorming ideas – allowing pupils the opportunity to rehearse their ideas in pairs and groups. The school has undertaken a considerable amount of work, reflected in the staff handbook, on developing pupils' literacy, thinking skills and it shows in the consistency of application across subjects. The literacy policy, representing as it does good practice for all, is also particularly relevant to pupils developing their bilingual skills. Teachers are also skilled at providing the resources to feed pupils ideas and help structure and shape them. They use

templates – writing frames – to develop an approach to formulate an essay or a discussion. Pupils' independence of learning is carefully guided and supported and developed over time; their academic confidence is nurtured by this scaffolding of support, so that they achieve, and because they achieve, they are boosted in confidence and the virtuous spiral of achievement and increased confidence is set in train.

39. Thirdly, is the degree of coaching and mentoring that takes place both formally and informally. Members of staff display a very genuine commitment to the pupils. They want them to succeed. Learning mentors provide very effective support.

40. Fourthly, pupils get through a lot of work. They are helped in this because of the consistent, very good homework that supports the development of independent learning skills. Whilst parents at the meeting discussed whether the school set too much or too little homework, 95 per cent of those responding to the questionnaire thought that homework was appropriate. Even more impressive was the fact that 93 per cent of pupils thought homework was worthwhile. In the sixth form, 92 per cent of students thought that homework was worthwhile and set regularly.
41. Fifthly, the teaching for pupils with additional needs is at least good, and often very good. Higher attaining pupils are challenged particularly well so that their achievement is accelerated across the school.
42. In the sample of lessons seen, pupils with special educational needs generally made good or very good gains in knowledge and understanding. Withdrawal groups for literacy and numeracy in Years 7, 8 and 9 are effective because teachers work with small groups of only two or three pupils and are very well aware of their specific needs. Individual education plans (IEPs) provide clear, if limited, overall targets for pupils. The range of information relating to strategies and approaches, to guide classroom teachers, lacks depth. There is good informal liaison between subject teachers and teaching assistants. The teaching assistants understand the needs of the pupils they are supporting. They provide the help and challenge required to enable these pupils to become more independent in their learning. There is a good level of ad hoc planning for lessons between subject teachers and learning support staff. SEN teachers and teaching assistants are allocated to specific pupils with statements and follow them through their school career. The co-ordinator holds weekly meetings with the teachers of special needs and teaching assistants. Overall, teachers are well aware of the needs of SEN pupils. Most teachers modify their teaching strategies and the resources used in lessons to accommodate them. The SENCO intends to review the use of differentiation across the departments with a view to improving practice. Teaching assistants are well integrated in the life of the school. They attend staff briefings and whole-school training opportunities. Teaching assistants provide input to pupil reviews and end-of-year reports.
43. Currently, part time specialist teachers of English as an additional language (EAL) spend up to three and a half days a week in school. Pupils are assessed on entry on the Hilary Hestor levels and regularly thereafter, to determine the levels reached and agreed with the local authority. The assessment is not yet linked to National Curriculum levels. Specific English as an additional language support is given to targeted pupils on a small group basis in class or on a withdrawal basis alongside pupils who also have special educational needs. Members of the English as an additional language teaching staff work in a support role only and, therefore, concentrate on a small number of targeted pupils mainly in English. There is no partnership teaching or effective joint planning, to improve the coverage of skills in EAL in most subjects, which could provide support to a wider group of pupils as well as spread good practice across the school. EAL teaching and other staff enable pupils' access to the curriculum by a variety of teaching strategies but there are no bilingual assistants who could help using first language or second language to access the curriculum. The recent appointment of a Bengali Family Support Worker has facilitated local links for supporting pupils.
44. Finally, teachers' assessment of the quality of pupils' work is good. They often give very clear oral feedback to let pupils know how they are doing in lessons, particularly in English and art. This gives students an extremely clear understanding of what to do next to improve their work. Marking of written work is generally thorough and helpful. It is very good in some subjects, for example English and design and technology, because detailed, constructive comments are provided and the students learn from the advice given. Teachers have very good knowledge of examination requirements, particularly at GCSE. They prepare students systematically in how to do well in their coursework and final examinations, using assessment information productively to help them improve.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 153 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
13 (8%)	56 (37%)	56 (37%)	25 (16%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

Sixth form

45. The overall standard of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. In over 80 per cent of the lessons observed, teaching and learning were good or better.
46. Teaching and learning in the sixth form reflect all the strengths seen in Years 7 to 11. Lessons are very well planned and incorporate a wide range of teaching styles. Teachers' strong subject expertise, commitment and ability to form close relationships, stimulate the students' interest and enhance their considerable hunger for learning. Much attention is paid to the recognition of different learning styles, and research led by the sixth form learning co-ordinator and based on student views is helping teachers to improve their understanding of how individual students learn. During lessons, teachers are ready to give support, advice and encouragement when they are needed, but they are also able to stand back to allow students to take responsibility for their own learning. In this way, they are supporting the achievement of these highly motivated students most effectively.
47. Overall, teachers aim to improve the attainment of all by offering them constant challenge, and they work hard to extend the most able students. Homework is set regularly and is planned to develop and consolidate classroom learning. Considerable energy flows into the organisation of a raft of extension activities to introduce students to academics and leading professionals who are able to lift their sights and their performance. In recent weeks, students of English literature were able to pose questions to a leading contemporary author, whilst a prestigious representative from the National School of Film and Television talked to students of media studies about short film production.
48. Teachers aim to foster the intellectual capacity of the students and to develop their individuality and creativity. Just occasionally, a very few students revelling in the stimulating intellectual and academic openness and creativity of the sixth form, get caught up in the excitement and buzz of the intellectual challenge but take time – sometimes too much time given the relatively short period of time of a two-year course – to see that, if they are to maximise their potential, their work needs to be underpinned by structure, rigour and discipline of personal application. This is not veiled criticism of the school; the report notes 'the exceptional levels of support offered by sixth form managers, and teachers play a significant part in helping students to enhance their personal learning skills', nor is it a criticism of the teaching, because in most subjects inspected, teaching was very good, developing very positive attitudes and approaches to the work. Many students at Camden are extraordinarily gifted and able, just a few need to take greater responsibility for nurturing their own skills and talents. For these few, it is not a question whether they can achieve, they can because they have the ability to 'switch it on at the last minute'; the question is, the quality of that achievement.
49. Assessment is very good in the sixth form. Work is marked very thoroughly, so that students are aware of how to improve its quality. This is particularly effective in art, biology, English and geography, where students have excellent opportunities to self-assess and set personal targets. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to ensure that students know the assessment requirements of examinations very well. Personal targets are very well used in directing students towards their goals. In the most successful lessons, teachers made regular reference to the targets for students' learning.

The curriculum

Overall, the quality of the curriculum is good. The curriculum is good in Years 10 and 11 and sound in Years 7 to 9. It is very good in the sixth form. The opportunities for enrichment are very good. Overall, accommodation and resources are good. Provision for special educational needs is good. The school improvement plan identifies the need to review the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High expectations are reinforced because pupils go from one good experience to another
- The carousel arrangements in the lower school cause discontinuities
- The school tailors the curriculum effectively to meet the needs of individuals
- The enrichment opportunities are very good with outstanding elements
- Provision for work related learning is good

Commentary

50. There are strengths in the curriculum in the lower school in terms of breadth, for example, the inclusion of classics and drama, but the carousel arrangements for music and ICT cause some discontinuities. A second language is not offered. Time allocation in some areas is generous and more pinched in others. A strength of the curriculum opportunities lies in the fact that pupils go from one good experience to another. It is this regularity of good experience that builds cumulatively, so that high expectations are mutually reinforced. The school timetable is constructed around the sixth form requirements to have a common timetable with partner schools. This sometimes causes a disjunction in the lower school. A broad range of GCSEs is offered and given the high standards, clearly there is a good match to the needs of pupils. A strength of the school is that it is very prepared to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of individuals. In Year 9, a small group of pupils identified as needing intensive support are taught in a separate class with a tailored curriculum - incorporating maths, English and science - that includes work experience, for example in beauty and construction. These pupils were on a residential trip during the inspection and it was not possible to see them at work. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum has been developed to offer beauty and childcare vocational courses whilst maintaining a range of GCSE subjects. Pupils who are struggling with the full range of GCSE courses take a reduced number. A pupil on the course spoke highly of the arrangements that the school had made to tailor the curriculum to what she was interested in.
51. The formal curriculum is enhanced by a very good enrichment programme with outstanding elements. There is a very full range of extra-curricular activities across the school. Participation in the arts is excellent. For example, the music department provides an impressive range of high quality ensemble, choir and orchestral performance opportunities that are available to the full ability range. Public performances take place throughout the year and there are workshop opportunities with the London Symphony Orchestra. Instrumental lesson opportunities are outstanding and there is excellent support from the local education authority. There are 23 visiting instrumental teachers and a composer-in-residence and pupils are able to study every orchestral and jazz/rock instrument. Instrumental teaching is of a very high standard. Two hundred instrumental lessons take place a week and there is a budget to support pupils who may not be able to afford instrumental lessons. Participation in sport is good. There is a wide range of provision at lunchtimes and after school. There is a club for gifted and talented pupils with specialised coaches. Large numbers of pupils from each year participated in the recent dance spectacular that was performed to the rest of the school. Support for learning outside the school day is very good.
52. The provision for work related learning is good and there is a good well established personal, social and health education programme which covers drugs, sex and health education as well as careers education and work related learning. The formal provision for citizenship is satisfactory. It is considerably enhanced through the school's ethos, expectations and wider

enrichment and extra-curricular provision. Preparation for each successive step as pupils move into the school, start their GCSE courses and consider moving into the sixth form is excellent.

53. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they have full access to the curriculum, except for small groups that are withdrawn from classics lessons in Years 8 and 9. There are also withdrawal sessions held during the week for small groups of pupils identified on entry as having weak literacy in Year 7. These pupils are withdrawn from physical education. Most pupils who have English as an additional language have full access to the whole curriculum, including the National Curriculum and religious education and are well integrated. Only those who are at the initial stages are withdrawn from classes because of both EAL and SEN needs and some also receive support in classes, but it is not consistent across the school.
54. Staff are highly qualified and very well matched to the demands of the curriculum. Teaching assistants and learning mentors play a very important part in supporting pupils' learning and are very well integrated into the school. The school is committed to workforce reforms and strengthening the numbers of support staff.
55. Accommodation is good. Accommodation in parts of the school is excellent. The school is well aware of the current limited accommodation for physical education and for the special educational needs department. The school is currently participating in a project to redesign the reception area.
56. Resources are good. There has been a significant investment in ICT and members of staff are making more use of ICT in lessons. Further development of the use of ICT is identified within the school development plan.

Sixth form

57. The curriculum provision in the sixth form is very good. The school offers a selection of 26 AS level, 25 A level, 2 AVCE, 1 BTEC and 2 GCSE courses in the sixth form. In addition, students may opt for alternative courses provided by the schools within the consortium. In practice, only 13 students travel to any of the partner schools.
58. Approximately, 65 per cent of pupils from Year 11 stay on into the sixth form. A very well designed conference in Year 11 provides internal students with an excellent understanding of the expectations of the sixth form. Students are attracted by the flexibility of choice and the quality of support received from sixth form managers. The school is very heavily oversubscribed by external students in Year 12, who apply from both the state and independent sectors. The number of students progressing from Year 12 into Year 13 each year is very high.
59. All sixth form students follow an exemplary assembly and tutorial programme that incorporates personal, social and health education, study skills, economic, political and social awareness and citizenship. The programme is well received by the students and adds considerable breadth to their sixth form experience. The statutory requirement to provide religious education in the sixth form is met within the outstanding enrichment programme of regular debates and conferences which engage students in spiritual, moral and ethical issues. In addition, the school provides an excellent enrichment programme that presents opportunities for students to engage in a wide variety of activities including the Duke of Edinburgh Award, sports and dance, drama and stage management, photography, debating, film studies and an outstanding choice of musical workshops. The programme also includes externally certificated courses, such as an AS level in critical thinking and a GCSE in Italian, and internally certificated courses such as creative writing.

60. Good provision is made for the development of key skills across the curriculum. The school ensures that the development of literacy is integral to every course. The quality of student literacy is apparent in the newspaper *Sixth Sense*, which is produced for the school by sixth form students. All students have the opportunity to refine their communication skills through their subject courses. In addition, the school arranges regular debates that involve the entire sixth form. A debate evaluating the acceptability of identity cards was seen to play to student strengths and their well-developed awareness of social and civic issues. Last year, the school won the annual Camden Borough debate and took part in a local debate on the 24-hour economy. The standard of numeracy in the sixth form is very good. The use of ICT is at least satisfactory in most subjects. Students' independent work demonstrates that they are competent, autonomous users of ICT.
61. Students benefit from an extremely well-planned careers programme that is run by an in-house co-ordinator. The quality of careers advice and planning is excellent and includes a full day preparatory conference in Year 11 and further conferences in the spring and summer terms of Year 12. Each year, an extremely impressive list of speakers – leaders in their chosen fields – including many ex-students and parents, from a range of different professions, are invited to these conferences to introduce a well-selected range of careers. During their time in the sixth form, students also have access to the services of Capital Careers, receive material from Springboard and Prospectus Finder and complete the Morrisby and Centigrade tests. In addition, there are opportunities for students to have weekly meetings with their tutors to discuss career options and to take part in e-mentoring. Encouraged by the school, many students take the opportunity to visit universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, to experience the lifestyle and identify courses that may interest them in their future learning. Some students choose to take a work experience placement, sometimes abroad, to improve their understanding of the world at work. Careers advice is extremely well supported by the sixth form leaders in their completion of personal statements and in the production of high quality higher education handbooks for both staff and students. The provision for careers is a key strength of the sixth form.
62. Staffing arrangements are very good. The number of teachers is in very good proportion to the number of sixth form students. Teachers and support staff are very well matched to the curriculum. Resources used in the sixth form provide good support for the students' learning. The accommodation for the sixth form is of very good quality, however, students lack access to computers and adequate space for quiet study.
63. Because of the shortage of school and local facilities, sports activities, such as rock climbing, can only be offered as part of the enrichment programme.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares for all pupils' welfare, health and safety in an excellent manner. The quality of support, advice and guidance is very good. There are very good arrangements to involve pupils in the life of the school by valuing and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outstanding procedures to ensure pupils work in a healthy and safe environment
- The excellent induction arrangements for pupils when they join the school
- The welcoming and purposeful tone that values pupils highly and equally
- The pupils' very good and trusting relationships with adults in the school
- The very good, impartial advice on further study or career opportunities
- The good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and the effective arrangements to include their views to improve the school
- The level and quality of support to sixth form students are key strengths of the school

Commentary

64. These features are a significant strength of the school.
65. The new school buildings provide very much improved facilities that ensure a clean, safe and healthy environment. Regular health and safety checks and a building maintenance programme identify and rectify promptly any hazards. There are very effective procedures in place for dealing with accidents. These are accurately recorded and analysed on a regular basis to identify and remedy the cause and frequency of any accidents. Members of staff show a very high awareness of safety issues within their departments and consistently provide an environment that is safe, supportive and gives the highest regard to pupils' well-being. This is a continuous improvement since the previous inspection. The high quality of display demonstrates how highly the school values the work of its pupils.
66. Pupils are listened to and hence relationships are very strong. Form tutors and year heads play a pivotal role. Mutual respect is encouraged and always apparent. Parents say that staff treat their children fairly and encourage them to become mature. There are very good arrangements in place to encourage pupils to look at how well they are doing in lessons. The effectiveness of guidance is very good in terms of pupils' personal development and academic progress. Good attention is given to analysing the performance and progress of different groups of pupils and this information is used to set targets. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
67. Pupils are very comfortable about approaching individual teachers or support staff for help or guidance appropriate to their needs. Pupils are able to follow suitable courses and programmes to enable them to achieve their goals for progression to further study. They have access to relevant and very effective support on personal issues. The partnership between the teachers and support assistants is very effective. The pupils are highly satisfied with the school and what it provides.
68. The very effective child protection procedures are fully understood by adults in the school. This is a continuous improvement since the previous inspection. The teachers know the pupils and their families very well, are sensitive to their needs and are able therefore to provide very good support and guidance. The school is called upon to support a small number of pupils who have social, emotional and behavioural problems and are at very serious risk. It works very hard on their behalf, but lacks the in-house professional expertise to meet their profound needs adequately. In partnership with the LEA, the school needs access to a lead professional to help co-ordinate the work of external agencies to support these pupils.
69. The special educational needs co-ordinator has been in post for some time and knows the pupils well. Overall, relationships with the teachers and teaching assistants are secure. Members of the department offer pupils a very good level of academic support. There are weekly meetings to review pupil progress between the special educational needs co-ordinator and the team of SEN teachers and teaching assistants. These are supplemented by informal meetings with heads of year and subject teachers on a daily basis. The progress of pupils with SEN is monitored through a range of school-wide assessments including observations, baseline assessment, National Curriculum tests and standardised tests. Support and guidance for pupils with SEN are comprehensive. They are offered the same support and guidance as other pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator liaises closely with the Connexions advisors to facilitate the transition reviews of pupils in Year 9 onwards. All pupils with statements have an annual review to which pupils, parents, school and LEA representatives contribute. There are good links with the LEA, especially with the behavioural unit. The school has good links with feeder primary schools and the SENCO visits the feeder schools to oversee the transfer of statemented pupils in the year prior to entry. The induction

programme is effective. The special educational needs co-ordinator will organise support for

National Curriculum tests and for external examinations in conjunction with the examinations officer. Where appropriate this includes special arrangements with the GCSE boards.

70. There are excellent arrangements to get to know children before they start at the school. Parents agree that the extensive induction procedures for both themselves and their child are a significant feature of the school.
71. The school actively encourages the pupils' views both formally and informally. The school council meets regularly to consider matters as diverse as raising money for local and national charities and business enterprise opportunities within school. These contributions to school improvement also have a very positive impact on pupils' personal development.
72. The school has very good systems for tracking and guiding the academic and personal progress of individual pupils through its very strong pastoral system. The arrangements begin before pupils enter the school, with data gathered from primary feeder schools. The information is often put to very good use, for example to identify where additional support is needed in order to enable pupils to achieve their potential. Targeted intervention, based on monitoring information that identified individual pupils who were capable of making better progress, is in place. Year heads and many subject leaders make very good use of the information they receive to group pupils and track individuals' progress. From the data gathered on progress reports, teachers and teacher assistants are able to identify pupils who are not working to their potential. Such pupils are very well mentored and supported, often through the very support given by learning mentors and other staff. However, the school's end-of-year reports for pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not explicitly record pupils end-of-key stage targets.

Sixth form

73. The school provides an excellent level of support and guidance for its students. The advice given by sixth form managers and tutors is based on substantial personal knowledge of each student. Students are kept very well informed of their progress through regular performance reviews and are involved in evaluating their achievements. Monitoring is tight and the school is quick to identify those students in danger of underachieving.
74. The information and guidance received about higher education are excellent. Students take part in range of higher education activities including visits to universities, including Oxbridge. Particularly good links exist with the University College, London, Queen Mary College and the University of Sussex. Each year, selected students participate at an Oxbridge seminar and a Saturday school at the LSE. The school has a very well stocked library of higher education prospectuses. In 2004, 99 per cent of students gained admission to university and 13 students obtained the necessary grades to take up Oxbridge offers.
75. A number of students have taken part in work experience as part of their vocational course or in response to their request. Others attend master classes, for example in law, medicine and engineering at selected universities. The school also encourages participation in the Excellence Challenge and LEA Master classes, which are designed to take the most able students beyond the demands of A level.
76. Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety are very good. Students may access the services of an experienced counsellor who is at the school for five hours a week. There are satisfactory procedures in place for monitoring students' attendance and punctuality. The level of individual support and guidance provided to students is a key strength of the school.

77. The school monitors its students thoroughly throughout their time in the sixth form. Very good use is made of subject data to assess the students' attainment against national data, and to assess how well they have done at AS and A level in comparison with predictions based on their GCSE results.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents is very good and so too are the links with the community and other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good arrangements to keep parents up to date about their child's progress and what is going on at school
- Excellent procedures to deal with parents' concerns
- Very good links with other schools when pupils join or leave Camden School
- The vast majority of parents always respond fully to the school's aim to improve standards

Commentary

78. Parents are highly satisfied with what the school does. They say they feel comfortable about approaching the school, that their children are well taught and that the school is well led and managed. The vast majority of parents make a significant contribution, by supporting their child's learning at home and this is having a very positive effect on the standards achieved by pupils. The very good partnership with parents is a continuous improvement since the previous inspection.
79. The headteacher is always available at the beginning and end of each day to deal with any concerns or complaints that parents may have. This informal contact ensures very high levels of parental satisfaction and ensures that any problems are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
80. Parents are well informed about the school through the prospectus, regular newsletters and school notice boards. A Bengali Home-School Liaison Worker is employed to ensure those parents for whom English is an additional language fully understand the information provided by the school. Parents appreciate the opportunities to discuss their child's progress at the formal meeting with teachers. A helpful end-of-year academic report, containing targets to help improve, accompanies this meeting. Parents are consulted about school improvement. For example, the new school building development was the subject of wide and far-reaching consultation. Parents are actively involved in the school through membership of The Camden School Community Association [CASCA] that raises substantial funds that are used for school resources. CASCA try to ensure all parents are welcomed when their child starts at the school and none are excluded from any activities that are provided in support of the school. This again makes a positive contribution to the excellent ethos enjoyed by the school.
81. The partnership with its primary schools is effective and includes good transfer of test data and pastoral information when pupils join the school in Year 7. These include very good arrangements to transfer information about pupils with special educational needs. The very effective partnership with other secondary schools and sixth form colleges ensures all students, including those travelling from further afield, quickly settle into school routines after an extensive induction programme. There are very good arrangements for shared professional development activities. The school is actively involved in several locally shared initiatives to improve standards.
82. Camden High School is very much the sought after 'local school' for girls living in the town. Most of the pupils live close by. The school's leadership builds very good links with the community on these foundations. There is an impressive range of business partnerships

formed as part of the work related learning programme, which make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. This is a continuous improvement since the previous inspection.

83. The school premises are used by the community at weekends but currently not during the week. Regular outside visits, both locally and abroad, make a very significant contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. The school successfully seeks out the skills and resources that are available locally that strengthen governance, decision-making and pupils' learning.

Sixth form

84. Parents have a high regard for the sixth form. Communications are good. Individual meetings are held in response to requests and parents receive a good level of information about sixth form events. A Bengali interpreter is available when required.
85. Where opportunities arise, parents are invited to contribute to conferences and educational activities. The school benefits from having many high profile parents and alumni drawn from politics, the media and the arts. The reputation of the sixth form is widely recognised in the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. Governance is very good. Leadership and management by the headteacher are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governing body are very committed to the school. They are prepared to challenge the school as critical friend. Debate is open and there is strong mutual respect between governors and senior management
- The school is not meeting requirements to hold a daily act of collective worship
- Leadership and management by the headteacher are excellent
- The headteacher is very effectively supported by the senior leadership team
- The high quality of staff is seen as the school's principal asset

Commentary

86. The governing body are very committed to the school and highly supportive. They are very involved in the life of the school and have, as a result, an informed awareness of the school's strengths. They are overall very experienced and bring to the governing body a wide range of personal and professional interests. The governing body were particularly active in raising money for Phase 1 of the building programme. The committee structure is used very effectively to monitor the work of the school. Debate is open and they are prepared to act as critical friend of the school. The governing body pays tribute to the chair of governors who is both very experienced and very committed. She has regular meetings with the headteacher. There is very strong mutual respect between senior management of the school and the governing body.
87. The governing body are aware that the school is not meeting the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. It does not feel that it is able to require staff to carry this out without rupturing the very positive relationship that currently exists. It takes the view that the school was established as a secular foundation and given the diversity of faiths in the school, enforcing a collective act of worship is not practicable. It does, however, place a high priority in ensuring that pupils receive religious education and that pupils' spiritual development is given high priority. It also expects pupils to participate in regular assemblies. The governing body may wish to seek to regularise the position by seeking a determination from the local

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). Whilst this will not change the school's legal responsibility to hold a daily act of collective worship, SACRE may perhaps recognise the many opportunities provided by the school within assemblies – assemblies are very important features in the school's overall excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development – to explore universal, community and personal values.

88. Leadership by the headteacher is excellent. It is very reflective and evaluative, clearly seeing the strengths of the school but also defining aspects that require improvement. There is clear strategic thinking which is founded on clear evaluation. Clear steps are taken to make improvements. The previous report noted the considerable autonomy given to managers; the headteacher has created a stronger, whole-school awareness whilst preserving the collegiate ethos and fully recognising the significant strengths of the whole-staff team. There is as a result a whole-school reinforcement of values, a reinforcement of high expectations and standards have risen. Her management is also excellent; confident and extremely well informed. This is reflected, for example, in the very evaluative documentation provided for the inspection. Data is used well to inform her evaluation. She is principled and ambitious for the pupils and students, the staff and the school.
89. Her leadership is supported very effectively by the senior leadership team who take specific leadership and management responsibilities for aspects of the school. The weft and warp of a strong pastoral team and a strong team of department heads work very well to support the individual pupil and student. Formal systems are supplemented by very strong informal networks of communication. Whole-school tracking systems are very effective and used well.
90. The governing body and the senior management of the school regard staffing as the main resource in the school, and therefore the recruitment and retention of staff receive their close attention. A high value is placed on qualifications, interviews and the induction of staff. Staff are deployed according to their strengths and supported by departmental teams. Some progress has been made in the management of the workload of staff, for example in administration, photocopying and displays.
91. The continuing professional development of staff is a high priority in the school. It is linked carefully both to curriculum development and to the performance management of staff. Members of staff in many departments have attended courses leading to the enrichment of teaching skills. In music, appropriate training has been put in place so that the investment in the music technology studio has an impact. In modern foreign languages, training in the use of film in languages teaching has strengthened the AS level course in French. The policy for performance management covers teachers and has been evaluated by them. One lesson per year is observed for each teacher. It is effective in leading to school improvement because of target setting and the sharing of good practice. The induction of staff is very good. There is a comprehensive programme that includes formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching. The school's contribution to initial teacher training is good. Several departments benefit from having trainee teachers and the programme provided by the school is comprehensive.
92. The school has high fixed costs so developments are necessarily at the margins of expenditure. The school improvement plan identifies priorities. Standard tendering procedures are adopted. Expenditure on supplies and services has been high. The school has changed its financial software system and has put in place more financial controls. The school receives above average income compared to national figures (but broadly average compared to other London schools). The school gives at least good value for money. The relatively high staff costs have resulted in a stable staff and manageable supply teacher costs. This in turn enables expenditure to be targeted on educational priorities such as textbooks, ICT and other resources.

Sixth form

93. The quality of leadership in the sixth form is very good. The head of sixth has a clear vision for the development and improvement of the sixth form. She is innovative and energetic in her approach and does much to create an aspirant culture, which celebrates the talents of the students and aims to develop the whole person. Her objective is not just to lend value to the individual, but also to foster a true sense of community where the values and views of others are respected and encouraged. In this, she is ably supported by a committed and vigorous leadership team, who work hard to maximise student learning through links with educational institutions and the community.
94. Sixth form leaders do much to endorse the unique ethos of the school and this, together with the determination to raise performance, creates a positive environment in which students flourish academically and personally. Secure relationships stem from the celebration of talent and diversity, and the will to listen and understand. Day-to-day interactions are enriched by respect and a sense of shared ambition.
95. The sixth form management team, made up of the head of sixth, the heads of year, the head of sixth form careers and the 'aim higher' co-ordinator, ensures that daily administrative arrangements, systems and procedures work very well. The school's strategies for monitoring and evaluating sixth form performance are very good. Value added information is used well to inform planning and resulted this year in the provision of extra classes in science and mathematics. Priorities for the future include the improved use of data to support learning and greater use of ICT in teaching and learning. Overall, planning for change and improvement and evaluation of outcomes have been very effective in ensuring the development of the sixth form.
96. Funding is used in a cost-effective way to give students a very good quality of teaching and excellent educational experience. Improvement has been very good since the time of the last inspection.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,773,000	Balance from previous year	808.00
Total expenditure	4,724,000	Balance carried forward to the next	49,808
Expenditure per pupil	4,957.00		

WORK RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good work experience programme promotes knowledge of the workplace
- A successfully completed audit of WRL (Work Related Learning) has identified developments for the future
- Pupils' individual experience is not tracked
- Effective vocational placements at the local college strengthen the schools' approach to IFP (Increased Flexibility Programmes)

Commentary

97. Pupils' work related learning experience is good with some very good features. They have a range of very good opportunities to learn through work, through their own direct experience. A good extensive work experience programme has been devised through good, collaborative planning between the WRL co-ordinator, the careers co-ordinator, the local careers adviser, good contacts in local companies and the consistent support from the deputy head with expertise in this area. Subjects such as modern languages successfully use evaluation of the work experience as part of a GCSE module. Students develop skills in job searches, making applications and developing a *curriculum vitae* as part of their personal and social education programme.
98. Developing knowledge and understanding of work and enterprise in the school is very good. Pupils' enterprise culture has been established over several years and gives opportunities for Economic and Industrial Understanding in Years 7 to 9 personal, social and health education. This gives pupils the opportunity to work in simulated work activities. Several pupils who find the normal school curriculum too challenging have the opportunity to work with a local college. The effective Increased Flexibility Programme links to the local college; plumbing and electrical courses are offered. The school balances this with a beauty course, which gives pupils a flavour of the workplace. All courses give pupils a chance to gain an NVQ L1 which in some cases leads to an apprenticeship. Pupils remarked that their confidence and self-esteem have grown during placement, because they are treated as adults and trusted to make decisions. Reports back to the school via staff visits and evaluation sheets are very good.
99. There are many good opportunities in the school to develop enterprise skills and skills for employability. These structures were seen in the effective work related learning audit and future action. The school has made a comprehensive coverage of the nine elements from the QCA guidance for the evaluation of work related learning across the school. The powerful enthusiasm of the WRL co-ordinator, who works very closely with the deputy headteacher and careers co-ordinator, promotes a very positive view of the widest opportunities to meet pupils' needs. However, despite the full audit, there is a lack of profile for WRL in most subjects' planning which limits co-ordination. Often departments are teaching about work related issues, such as problem solving, communication, data handling, application of ICT and teamwork, but the teaching is incidental. There is no tracking of individual students' experience to enable the WRL co-ordinator to map a whole picture of provision - missing opportunities to collate these skills in a personal profile for all pupils.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' high expectations and excellent subject knowledge lead to very good achievement
- Pupils work independently, collaboratively and constructively to promote learning
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive, allowing pupils to extend and build upon their ideas
- The very good leadership of the department encourages high professional standards in planning and teaching
- Marking and assessment of pupils' work are detailed and give precise targets for improvement

Commentary

100. Attainment by Year 9, Year 11 and Year 13 is high and is well above the national average.
101. Pupils' attainment in English when they enter the school is, overall, average. Results in National Curriculum tests in 2004 at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average, with 91 per cent of pupils achieving Level 5 and above. Overall, the trend over three years is positive despite the slight dip against prior attainment in the results last year. Results over three years in GCSE English and English literature examinations were also well above the national average. During their time in the school, pupils make very good progress and achieve highly.
102. Standards seen during the inspection confirmed the good picture given by these results. In almost all lessons, pupils make good progress. This is true of pupils of all abilities. For example, in a mixed-ability Year 7 lesson, pupils were asked to write a poem collaboratively employing specific grammatical terms. Because of the excellent preparation and close support of the teacher, all pupils were successful and went on to comment constructively on one another's poems. Teachers set challenging tasks for their pupils, secure in the knowledge and understanding of their pupils' needs. They have high expectations and this is matched by pupils' work of real commitment and quality. Marking supports this, with detailed comments and personal targets for improvement.
103. Although some pupils have reading ages at or below their chronological age on admission, pupils become fluent in reading aloud and meaningfully early on. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud in class, and there is a guided reading scheme for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils are tested after ten months on the scheme and on average have made significant progress. The department is well supported in this by the school library and by staff from special needs and English as an additional language.
104. Pupils benefit from good teaching in oral skills. They have many opportunities for practising speaking and listening, so that from Year 7 to Year 11, the majority are articulate, able to speak with authority in small groups and to collaborate well in discussion and debate. Pupils are encouraged to develop very good listening skills so that they are able to take an idea and build upon it. A significant feature at all levels is the teaching of technical and sophisticated vocabulary, regularly reinforced by the teachers and used by pupils in their discussions about literature. In this way, pupils are encouraged to express themselves fluently and with accuracy, untrammelled by self-consciousness or self-doubt. The opportunities for debate

and discussion underpin their equally accurate and fluent writing. Teachers ensure that writing tasks are well prepared by the choice of stimulus material, opportunities for discussion and by a variety of strategies, in general custom-made by the teachers. These supportive structures and their very effective interrelationship provide a very effective 'scaffolding' to support the development of pupils' ideas and written work, with the result that pupils develop equally strong writing skills.

105. Pupils work with enthusiasm and interest. They take pleasure in both language work and their texts in literature. They enjoy considerable responsibility for their own learning, and work together to analyse text or to prepare a presentation. Pupils' very good attitudes are a significant factor in helping them make very good progress. They generally approach their work seriously and sensibly, keep a good level of concentration and listen well, to both their peers and their teachers. Because teachers know their subject and their pupils well, relationships are courteous and trusting; therefore in most lessons there are very good conditions for learning.
106. There is a good range of learning opportunities for the pupils. Teachers ensure that pupils' personal and social development is enhanced as a natural part of the lesson. Study skills are also interwoven, so that pupils are helped to find the most effective way of managing their work. There is evidence of good use of ICT in homework assignments and increasing use of interactive whiteboards in lessons. New classrooms, many equipped with computers, offer a spacious and attractive environment for the subject. A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, including a trip to the Western Front, visits by world-class authors and a creative writing club encourages pupils to value and to understand their work in the wider context.
107. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, with the majority of lessons observed good or better. A high proportion of lessons are very good or excellent. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject are very good and careful, apt and sensitive questioning of the pupils leads to very good learning. Teachers plan lessons very effectively, using a wide range of strategies and stimuli so that pupils are engaged throughout the lesson. Homework is regularly set and extends the learning done in class. The result of this good teaching is that pupils are very positive about their learning, concentrate well and are able to discuss their own achievement confidently. The quality of teaching is supported by the consistent implementation and skilful use of literacy strategy practices: Teachers ensure that pupils understand what they are learning through making objectives explicit at the start of lessons and reviewing the progress towards those objectives with the pupils regularly at the end of lessons.
108. Assessment procedures are very good, ensuring that pupils are given the most suitable intervention, support and help. Detailed tracking of pupils' progress is used in the groupings and in ensuring that pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are nurtured to meet their full potential.
109. English is very well led and managed. The head of department has a clear view of the strengths of the department and ensures that new developments have a clear focus. There is good and effective teamwork that, together with excellent subject knowledge and a strong ethos, support and nurture learning throughout the department. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen and the quality of teaching improved further.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

110. Literacy standards across the school are very good. This is due to the rigour with which teachers address language development and the independence of learning which is fostered across the school. Teaching styles allow the pupils to take control and command of their own learning. Teachers' questions are probing, and they listen very carefully to what the pupils say. Through careful questioning pupils develop strategies to initiate their own questioning, and they seek and gain the answers they require to advance their learning. Teachers

continually assist pupils to develop language, for example by introducing new and complex vocabulary as part of their lesson plans and as opportunity arises, and they reinforce this until the words are a natural part of the pupils' lexicon. Subject-specific and key words are in general taught well across the curriculum. Teachers ensure that pupils have the resources they need to develop their ideas, by providing background and other source material. Pupils read aloud, often very fluently, and are confident when presenting their ideas in the classroom. Pupils often work in pairs or groups, rehearsing their ideas and brainstorming, and peer- and self-evaluation is confidently and constructively undertaken as a key strategy to promoting learning and oracy skills. The rigour of language development, the provision of scaffolding materials and writing frames to support the pupils' thinking and writing and pupils' very good attitude to learning make literacy a strength of the school.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average in French and Spanish by the ages of 14 and 16
- There is a team of highly competent teachers who are very well led and managed
- The provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities enhances learning
- ICT is not used to its full potential to practise and consolidate learning
- The schemes of work are inconsistent in quality and have insufficient reference to cross-curricular issues
- Pupils are limited to the study of one modern foreign language to GCSE level

Commentary

111. Results for pupils aged 14 in 2004 were well above the national average. Although a greater proportion of pupils reached higher levels in Spanish than in French, overall performance in French exceeded that in Spanish. In GCSE, results were well above average in both languages with significantly more top grades than is expected nationally. Pupils perform better in French and Spanish than in most other subjects.
112. In Years 7 to 9 standards of work seen were above average in both French and Spanish. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 8 use grammatical rules to give parts of Spanish irregular verbs. Average-attaining pupils in Year 7 can recall the names of school subjects in French from symbols and give their opinions. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 can construct a description of a house by filling in gaps in a text. In Years 10 and 11, the standards of work seen were well above average overall. Pupils can use a range of tenses and wide vocabulary to write at length about topics they have studied in class such as work experience and life in the town and country.
113. Achievement is good in each language in Years 7 to 9. Pupils respond well to their teachers and make rapid progress. Their conscientiousness means that they learn work well and this enables them to achieve very well in tests. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is very good and pupils can focus on examination skills because they are well informed about the requirements. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve in line with others. Gifted and talented pupils achieve very well and there are opportunities for them to extend their skills, including collaborative work with other schools and short after-school courses in other languages. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because the teachers give them support and the work is often suitably adapted to enable them to make good progress.
114. Teaching and learning are good in the majority of lessons and often very good, especially in Years 10 to 11. Teachers know their pupils very well and they plan thoroughly for their needs. In each lesson, they provide a variety of tasks with a range of appropriate resources. They conduct the lessons very ably in the foreign language and this accelerates the pupils' learning.

Pupils are inspired by the vitality of the presentation of material and they often demonstrate a genuine spirit of enquiry. Teachers have the competence to be flexible in their approach to the work, leading to sound working relationships. They mark work regularly and give advice about how to improve. Pupils know how they are achieving in each language skill and their progress is carefully tracked. Data is used to inform planning and raise achievement.

115. The department is very well led and managed. The teachers work well as a team and share materials. There is a culture of working towards the highest grades with a wish to develop depth of knowledge and secure skills. There is very clear planning for the future and careful budgeting. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored. Documentation is of a high professional standard, though schemes of work are inconsistent. They do not adequately reflect the department's contribution to cross-curricular themes such as work related learning, citizenship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is some planned provision for the use of ICT but it not regularly used for individualised practice and consolidation work, nor for the presentation of new material in the classroom. Learning is enhanced by the provision of a popular range of visits to France and Spain.
116. After the first term in Year 7 learning both languages, pupils have the choice to continue with either Spanish or French but there is no opportunity to take up another modern foreign language to GCSE level before the sixth form. This limits the experience of gifted linguists. However, there is good provision for pupils who are already competent in other languages such as Chinese, German and Welsh to be entered for GCSE, and in 2004, a small number of pupils who responded to this opportunity gained top grades.
117. Accommodation is satisfactory. Rooms are well equipped and provision has been made for a departmental office, but two of the classrooms have problems with acoustics. Resources are being carefully updated and pupils are provided with good reference material for homework and independent learning.
118. Since the last inspection, the department has made good progress. There is more consistency in the teaching of French in Years 7 to 9, more challenge and greater expectations. This has contributed to higher attainment in French by the age of 14.

Classics

Classical studies was sampled so no overall judgement as to provision has been made. The provision in Latin and Greek in the main school is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain consistently high standards
- Teachers have an excellent grasp of the subjects
- Teachers take great care over pronunciation of Latin and Greek, providing a very good model for pupils
- These subjects contribute well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils
- The use of information and communication technology to support learning is underdeveloped

Commentary

119. All pupils take a foundation classical studies course in Year 8. In Year 9, there is a choice between continuing classical studies and beginning Latin. At the end of Year 9, these subjects become part of the options programme, as does Greek. Just over half of the current Year 11 is taking one or more classical subjects. This reflects the highly popular nature of the courses, and the confidence that pupils have in those who teach them. Teaching in both languages is very good. The teachers have a very competent grasp of these subjects and this

makes pupils feel confident that they are receiving high quality support. Teachers can encourage pupils to set themselves challenging targets. Relationships between pupils and teachers in and out of class are excellent. Pupils recognise the high level of commitment by the teachers and appreciate the way that they run extra lunchtime sessions to support those who have missed work or are experiencing problems. The head of department manages this curriculum area very well. She undertakes rigorous analysis of results and how various groups within the classes have performed, as well as looking at work samples and observing lessons. There is a very good programme of visits to classical plays, museums and sites of classical interest that adds significantly to the teaching of the subject. The rooms that are used for classics have colourful displays of reference material and pupils' work, which give them an identity as a subject base. However, pupils make less use of word processing to present their work than is usually seen. There are adequate resources for the teaching of the subject.

Latin

120. In 2004, all pupils attained A to C grades, with nearly 40 per cent gaining an A* grade. The high standards seen at the last inspection have been maintained well in recent years. Lessons and work seen in the inspection show that the current Year 9 and Year 11 pupils attain good standards. The group taking Latin for GCSE this year is large and contains a wide ability range. There is no significant difference in the attainment of different ethnic groups. Pupils with English as an additional language receive appropriate support, as do pupils with special educational needs.
121. Younger pupils have a good knowledge of life in classical times. They develop an understanding of the way that Latin word order differs from English and how the endings of words indicate their function in the sentence. GCSE pupils have good strategies for translating Latin, as well as a growing awareness of literary devices. Pupils in Year 11 translate from Latin with some fluency and an awareness that translations need to be in idiomatic English. The teaching for GCSE moves pupils on to an appreciation of the literary values of Roman authors. In pupils' written work they recognise that writers exhibit bias and that sources need to be evaluated.
122. Pupils are responsive in lessons and enjoy the work set for them. They work in a purposeful manner and listen attentively. The teachers have a very good grasp of the subject matter and an obvious enthusiasm that stimulates pupils. This high level of teachers' expertise helps pupils to achieve very well. All teachers take great care about the pronunciation of Latin and this provides an excellent model for pupils. Written work is set regularly and marked in a way that affirms achievement. The marking usually contains comments that help pupils to make further progress.
123. The strong place that this subject holds in the school is an encouraging sign of the breadth and balance of the curriculum. Teaching often links Latin with English and other languages and extends the vocabulary of pupils effectively. However, opportunities to link Latin and common English words were not always exploited fully. Pupils' use of computers to word process work or to research topics on the Internet is less developed than in many schools.

Greek

124. There are small but viable groups in Years 10 and 11 who study Greek. Because of the very full timetable, teaching of the subject takes place before the school day. This is indicative of the high level of commitment of both teachers and pupils to the subject. Pupils are aware that they have an opportunity that is available in very few schools of this type, and they value it. In the last reported year, all entrants attained grades between A and C with 71 per cent attaining A* or A. The standards in the current Year 11 are similar. These results are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. Teachers are very enthusiastic and have a highly competent grasp of the language. This – coupled with the positive attitudes of the pupils – helps them to achieve very well. In Year 10, pupils quickly become confident about using the Greek

alphabet and the endings of nouns and verbs. In a very good lesson for this year group, the teacher encouraged the pupils to form various tenses and to analyse how the various added syllables and final letters could help them to identify tenses accurately. A lesson on the *Odyssey* for a group in Year 11 showed that pupils have a good grasp of grammar and vocabulary as a basis for accurate translation. The teacher skilfully guided pupils without removing the element of challenge in the task. She also linked Greek words like 'stethos' (chest) with English words like 'stethoscope' which effectively enhanced the vocabulary of the pupils. Pupils develop an understanding of the belief systems and social structures of the ancient world, which contributes well to their spiritual, moral and social development.

125. Only two lessons were seen in **classical studies** during the inspection so there has been no overall judgement as to the provision. All pupils begin the study of this in Year 8 and then choose either classical studies or Latin at the end of the year. There are often large groups (last year 42 pupils took the subject for GCSE). This means that there is a wide range of ability within the group. In the last reported year, 74 per cent of pupils attained grades A to C. Many of these attained better grades than their target grade. Over time, the results have varied, but results have been at or above the national average in recent years. This is similar to the situation at the last inspection. From the work seen, indications are that the standards of the current Years 9 and 11 are at least in line with the national average. The subject helps them to gain a secure knowledge of how the cultures of the Greeks and Romans have been a major influence on Europe and Britain of the 21st century.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above national averages by the ages of 14 and 16
- The more able pupils achieve very well
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge
- Pupils are very supportive of each other's learning
- Some pupils' attention wanes by the end of lessons

Commentary

126. In the 2004 statutory tests for Year 9 pupils, standards were above national averages and above those found in similar schools. Standards are rising over time. A significant proportion of pupils attain the higher levels (at Level 6 and above). Standards of Year 9 work seen in lessons and in their books during the inspection are in line with the above average standards indicated by the test results.
127. The GCSE mathematics results for Year 11 pupils in 2004 were above the national average for girls. The more able pupils performed very well in the 2004 GCSE examination with a very high proportion attaining the top grade (A*). There is no noticeable trend in the GCSE over recent years. The number of pupils attaining the A* to C grades varies from about five to 10 per cent above national averages.
128. As standards on entry to the school are average, achievement is good by the end of Year 9. It is also good by the end of Year 11. This is because of consistently good teaching and the very positive attitudes of pupils of all abilities in all years. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in mathematics, receiving the appropriate support.
129. The overall quality of learning and teaching is good. The teachers, all specialists, have very good knowledge of their subject. The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils is good. Learning objectives are made clear at the outset of lessons. Class routines are usually very well established. The behaviour of pupils is very good. There is a positive learning

environment in most classrooms. Pupils help each other. They listen very well and answer, as well as ask, questions confidently. Pupils take their work seriously and most work very hard. This means that lessons usually move along at a crisp pace. Teachers use information and communication technology well to get information across. The National Numeracy Strategy is satisfactorily established. Lessons contain a balance of activities so that pupils' interest is usually maintained. Sometimes the length of the lessons is too much for the less able pupils, with some loss of concentration towards the end. Sometimes where pupils have a second mathematics lesson later on the same day, this lesson is less successful than others. The assessment of pupils' work through marking and testing is good. Guidance is given so that pupils know what they have to do to improve their work. Pupils make satisfactory use of computers to support their learning.

130. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a sense of purpose and direction in the department. Planning is underpinned by detailed reviews of standards and very good use of data. This provides clear information on strengths and weaknesses, and these are acted upon. There are effective systems in place to track pupils' progress, and to give additional focused support where necessary. The time given over to the subject is helping to raise standards and additional provision is being made to support groups of pupils.
131. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Resources to support teaching and learning are improved. The use of information and communication technology has greatly improved, particularly its use by teachers. The department is reflective and the potential for further improvement is good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

132. Overall planning for the development of numeracy to promote learning is good in other subjects, both in the main school and in the sixth form. Staff training on numeracy across the curriculum has taken place and the subject teachers are aware of the contribution they can make to the development of pupils' standards of mathematics. The teaching of numeracy is given a very high priority in design and technology and science, including in the sixth form.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching based on high expectations results in successful achievement by pupils
- A committed and enthusiastic team of teachers with very good command of the subject
- The excellent visionary leadership of the new head of department supported by the second in charge of science
- Pupils' excellent attitudes have a positive impact on their learning
- Marking with comments is in place but is used inconsistently across the department
- Insufficient use is made of data to inform teachers' lesson planning

Commentary

133. Standards attained by Year 9 pupils in the 2004 national tests were well above average compared with all schools and above results obtained for similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in 2004 was above average compared to similar schools and well above that for all schools nationally. This represents very good achievement by these pupils. The results were an improvement on those of the previous year.
134. The percentage of A* to C grades gained by Year 11 pupils in 2004 was above average compared with similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades in the 2004 GCSE examinations was very high compared to the national average. The results for 2004

continue to improve with an increased proportion being awarded the higher grades, which shows very good achievement.

135. The standard of work seen was well above average in all year groups. Pupils' achievement, including those with special educational needs, is very good. Pupils studying the GCSE biology course introduced in 2003 make very good progress. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils were able to use complex science terms to explain the components of a DNA molecule.
136. The quality of teaching and learning across all year groups is very good. All lessons seen were satisfactory or better. Teachers' strong command of the subject is evident in their teaching and pupils respond well to the high expectations placed upon them. Excellent supportive relationships between teachers and pupils create a strong work ethic in all lessons. Pupils display impressive attitudes towards their work and collaborate successfully with each other without prompting. The most successful teaching seen was characterised by effective planning, challenging questions, a stimulating pace and pupils sharing their ideas with their peers. Teaching was less effective when the pace of the lesson was slow and the teacher did not use question and answer sessions to encourage pupils to use their own ideas to support their understanding of science.
137. The curriculum offers a challenging learning experience for pupils and the grouping of pupils for teaching takes good account of their abilities. ICT is used to support the learning of science in all year groups. Teachers have worked hard to create an attractive teaching and learning environment in all laboratories and this creates a stimulating learning environment.
138. Leadership and management are excellent. An experienced and highly skilled second in charge of science ably supports the newly appointed head of department and together they effectively lead a large team of well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers. The department is committed to improvement and departmental meeting time is used to review current practice to improve standards. Clear and comprehensive policies and procedures are in place. Assessment information is used well to track pupils' progress towards targets and to identify those who need additional support or guidance. Although clear procedures for assessment and the marking of work are in place, they are used inconsistently and are not developed enough to inform fully what pupils need to do to improve their learning. The use of pupils' prior attainment data to inform lesson planning is not consistent throughout the department.
139. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. ICT is used as a teaching and learning resource and ICT opportunities are embedded in all schemes of work. The department has recently purchased laptop computers and has interactive whiteboards installed in most laboratories that are used in lessons. The department continues to be supported by an excellent senior technician who leads an efficient team that supports teachers in lessons.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management have resulted in much improved resources and rising standards
- Teaching is good because teachers plan well and have a very strong knowledge of the subject
- In Years 7 to 9 the rotation of subjects and the below average curriculum time have a negative impact on standards
- Very good attitudes and positive relationships enable all pupils in Years 7 to 8 to achieve well
- The lack of accredited courses in Years 10 and 11 disrupts learning progression

Commentary

140. In 2004, the teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 were unreliable and must be discounted. There were no GCSE results in 2004. Standards on entry to the school are in line with the national average. During the inspection, standards seen in Year 9 work were below average, having been significantly affected by the previously unreliable computer resources. Standards in Years 7 and 8 were above average and represent good achievement.
141. In Years 7 and 8 pupils show good skill and confidence in using computers and can competently navigate the school's network to retrieve files. In Years 9 to 11, competence with computers is satisfactory. Communication work is a strength and literacy standards are above expectations. Year 7 imaginatively combine text, images and sound to create aesthetically pleasing presentations. Web pages in Year 8 are of a similar high standard and pupils can tailor their work to suit different audiences, for example young children or citizens of another EU country. Modelling work with spreadsheets is less well developed but standards are satisfactory. In geography, for example, spreadsheets are used to analyse and display the results of a project about local shops. Pupils show good initiative when working independently and a very mature attitude when evaluating their work.
142. Teaching and learning are good, sometimes very good. Lessons are characterised by good planning and clear objectives that are shared with pupils. Teachers use a good range of strategies to provide variety in lessons but the unusually long lesson times can tax pupils' concentration. The very good subject knowledge of teachers is used very effectively in question sessions to enhance pupils' understanding and in supporting individuals. There is a very good emphasis on the correct use of technical language. The department has already identified the need for a greater range of differentiated activities that better match individual capabilities and also for sharing assessment information more effectively with pupils so that they know how to improve. A particular strength is the use of professional standard and other modern software to help raise standards and capture pupils' interest. There is extensive support for learning outside the classroom and this serves the needs of gifted and talented pupils well. Good support enables pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language to achieve equally with others but opportunities are sometimes missed to challenge higher-attaining pupils.
143. Leadership and management are very good. The recent developments were very well planned and effected and are the foundation for improvement across the school. The head of department is a good role model who provides very good support to the newly qualified teacher, the technicians and other departments. There is a very clear vision for the future, building on the school hallmarks of confidence and creativity in pupils.
144. Teaching resources are of a high standard and are used very effectively to enhance the learning experience of pupils, for example the new interactive whiteboards. The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory and has a negative effect on standards. The rotation of subjects in Years 7 to 9 disrupts learning and the curriculum time in Year 9 is well below average, despite recent enhancement. The absence of accredited courses such as GCSE in Years 10 and 11 means that pupils start sixth form ICT courses with below average skills. The technicians provide very good support. Internet access is safe and well managed. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching and resources are much improved and standards are rising. There is good capacity for further improvement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

145. Provision in ICT across the curriculum is good with some very good and excellent features. There has been no co-ordination or audit of the provision but many departments have taken good advantage of the improved computer resources. Staff skills with the new interactive whiteboards are developing steadily. The number of computers meets government guidelines and nearly half of them are new. Use of ICT in music is excellent with much use by pupils for composition, listening and assessment. Design and technology makes very good use of software for computer-aided design and manufacture while in art there is good use for manipulating images. Good practice was also seen in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and geography. Special educational needs pupils benefit from software to develop basic skills in the specialist centre. A recent and beneficial development is to make pupils' work accessible from home.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above the national average
- There is an excellent programme of fieldwork
- The subject makes a very good contribution to girls' education in wider areas of the curriculum
- Accommodation is poor

Commentary

146. Pupils achieve very well in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results in the last two years have been well above the national average. In 2003, over half of the girls who took the examination attained grades A* or A, because higher-attaining pupils are very well challenged, and almost 90 per cent attained grades A* to C. In the last three years, no pupil has attained less than grade E. The standards in the present Years 10 and 11 are also well above national expectations because of very good teaching and the girls' very positive attitudes.
147. Pupils' geographical skills are low on entry to the school. Well-devised units of work in Year 7 develop pupils' numerical and enquiry skills and give a foundation for sophisticated fieldwork investigations in Years 8, 9 and 10. In Year 9, for example, pupils compare the quality of life in Camden with St Albans, using ICT very effectively to present their report and to complement their field data from both places. Some of their reports would merit the highest grades at GCSE. The achievement of the most able pupils in Years 7 to 9 is very good. Overall, achievement in these years is good, so that at the end of Year 9 standards are in line, or slightly above, national expectations. Compared to other pupils there is no difference in the achievement of girls with special educational needs or those for whom English is an additional language.
148. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are consistently very good. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good; in lessons seen, it ranged from satisfactory to very good. Where learning is very good, lively teaching excites pupils, encourages creativity in their work and engages them actively in whole-class discussion. In these lessons, there is a buzz and girls describe the subject as 'fun'. All lessons are well planned and objectives are shared with pupils. Good assessment practice, including very thorough marking, helps pupils make progress, especially with examination technique in Years 10 and 11. A feature of the teaching is the extent to which pupils are referred back to earlier work so that they reinforce and build upon prior knowledge and understanding.

149. The subject makes a strong contribution to girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and to teaching citizenship. Examples were seen in lessons that involved pupils evaluating coastal management from different people's perspectives and considering the effect of cultural factors on Nicaragua's population growth. In a school assembly during the inspection, Year 9 girls gave a presentation on Fair Trade based on their work in geography. Effective strategies for developing pupils' numeracy and literacy are also incorporated into the department's teaching.
150. Resources, which were inadequate at the last inspection, are now adequate and teachers prepare a stimulating range of materials for lessons. However, there is scope for providing alternative written tasks for lower-attaining pupils. Although nearly all lessons in Years 7 to 11 take place in the two geography rooms, one of the rooms provides very cramped accommodation and restricts the ease with which group work and practical activities can take place.
151. Leadership and management are good. The head of department recognises the strengths of individual teachers and encourages their initiatives, although greater emphasis could be put on sharing their different skills. Nevertheless, the teachers share a commitment to evaluation and change in order to provide a challenging curriculum. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school because of good teaching and learning
- Results are above average in GCSE examinations and inspection findings demonstrate improving standards
- Very good relationships promote positive attitudes to learning
- Popularity of history is demonstrated in the increasing take up of the subject as an option in GCSE
- Opportunities for pupils to develop ICT skills in history are limited

Commentary

152. GCSE examination results continue to remain above average with most pupils achieving the higher grades (A to C), and those achieving A to G grades are slightly above the national average. The higher grades are ten per cent higher than national averages. There is a clear rising trend. By Year 9, pupils achieve average standards overall. In work seen and lessons observed, it is evident that pupils demonstrate a good sense of chronology and they know causes and effects of events of different periods of history and their understanding of historical language is good. In Years 10 and 11, pupils build well on their previous knowledge and understanding and use technical language well in discussion and in writing. They question historical sources effectively to extract information to identify reasons and explain events very well, building their historical skills of enquiry and interpretation. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils of all abilities, including those with special needs and those who learn English as an additional language, did a very good assessment of Stalin's period, analysing the good and bad aspects of his reforms and why. They showed their depth of understanding about improvements in education and health, employment, five-year plans and issues of collectivisation, food shortages and purges.
153. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers know their pupils very well, have a good command of their subject and they use a variety of effective teaching styles, which enable pupils to acquire new historical knowledge and deepen their understanding. They teach historical terminology and skills systematically and cover examination requirements well.

They provide very effective challenge, coupled with high expectations of both behaviour and standards of work. There is a brisk pace and a good use is made of the interactive whiteboard, overhead projector and teacher-made and other materials. For example, in a lesson observed in Year 9, pupils were highly engaged in their empathetic learning about conditions of soldiers in the trenches during the First World War. The teacher projected the painting, *Over the Top* by John Nash that elicited sensitive responses from pupils because of the knowledge they had gained because of their visit to the Imperial War Museum. Teachers use ongoing assessment well but marking is not always regular or formative. Literacy skills are reinforced well by the use of writing frames, reading in classes and subject glossaries and numeracy skills by graphs, tables and comparative analysis of populations and military weapons. Links with citizenship are made through comparisons between systems of government and social grouping in different periods of history and pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is promoted well. There is also enrichment through visits to museums and places of historical interest and after school provision for catching up. However, limited use of ICT in lessons reduces opportunities to build pupils' skills further. Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning; they collaborate well and contribute actively to their own learning, and their achievement is good as a result.

154. Leadership and management are good. There is a good teamwork, members of staff are valued and there is a common purpose. Subject expertise is used well and performance management is in place. However, there is a weakness in the management of assessment and planning, particularly in relation to continued staff development for new initiatives such as the use of ICT in history, embedding of the Key Stage 3 strategy and sharing the good practice in the variety of teaching methods within the department. The main issues of the last inspection have been addressed well. The quality of teaching and learning has improved because of new staff and results have been maintained at well above average.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. This contributes very well to pupils' achievement
- Examination results in GCSE were well above average
- The contribution made by the subject to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent
- Very good leadership and management of the subject ensure that pupils are provided with a full curriculum

Commentary

155. Standards in the GCSE full course were well above average in 2003. Seventy-one per cent of pupils achieved A* to C, a very good result. In 2004, standards improved and 81 per cent of pupils achieved A* to C. This represents high standards when compared with similar schools.
156. By Year 9, standards are above average in relation to the locally agreed syllabus. Given pupils' average standards on entry to the school, this represents good achievement. Pupils are well able to link their knowledge of religion with their everyday experiences.
157. By Year 11, standards are well above average. Pupils extend their knowledge and understanding of how they can learn from religion and apply it in their lives. They make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of religious concepts. The achievement of pupils is very good.

158. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts through the teachers' effective use of discussion and questioning. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good because pupils are provided with good support and with work to match their specific needs. The use of key words and subject-specific language enable pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills. Pupils make good progress because of the teachers' awareness of individual student needs. Teachers manage student behaviour very well and this contributes to their learning. They have clear expectations of pupils and challenge them to extend their understanding. Assessment is satisfactory. Although the procedures provide a sound basis for assessing what pupils know and understand, there is no specific assessment on *learning from* religion. Not enough work is done to set detailed targets, and so pupils are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve.
159. Pupils' spiritual and moral awareness is excellent. There are plenty of opportunities in the curriculum to develop these aspects of pupils' personal development and these are exploited extremely well. Pupils demonstrate a clear respect for the views, faiths and traditions of each other. Their cultural awareness is particularly strong.
160. Subject leadership is very good and innovative, with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment. She has been successful in developing a strong team approach, and is very well supported by one other teacher who is also a specialist. The monitoring of the work of teaching is well developed. The subject is managed well and this is reflected in the quality of religious education provided for the pupils.
161. There has been good progress since the last inspection; standards are rising and the quality of teaching has improved. These have had a good impact on pupils' attainment, achievement and progress.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very good attitudes to the subject contribute to their achievement
- Good and better teaching raises standards of making and challenges designing
- Very good assessment for learning tracks pupil progress
- Technical support is limited on time allocation, impeding progress and overloading teachers
- Improved accommodation and resources contribute to raising standards

Commentary

162. Pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 are average; on entry to the school, there is no exchange of information on pupils' design and technology experience from their prior learning. In 2004, design and technology GCSE examination results at A* to C were well above the LEA and the national statistics, with outstanding results at A* and A grades. At A* to G the pass rate was 100 per cent representing very good equality of opportunity because 60 per cent of the Year 11 pupils opted for design and technology. The subject has developed very good strategies to support pupils from different cultural backgrounds and those with special needs and their results are above expectation.

163. Achievement is good between Years 7 and 9 because pupils build up a wide information base on materials and about techniques. Books are generally well presented and many pupils make good use of ICT. The use of photocopied sheets stuck into books is a pilot idea and its efficiency is being reviewed. Lesson plans ensure good literacy and numeracy strategies are in place, pupils are confident with data handling, nets and templates and simple weighing and measuring. Effective integration of literacy skills promotes good design communication. Techniques such as drawing and rendering are not taught consistently across the department, which restricts the quality of technical presentation. Good consistent homework extends learning and hones the pupils' primary and secondary research.
164. Learning in Years 10 and 11 accelerates into a more mature approach to market research and achievement is very good. Pupils build successfully on their earlier work. Three technology options are offered for GCSE and results are well above the national average year on year, including the dip in 2003. Products are finished very well, attention to detail, annotation of designs and the use of anthropometrics and ergonomic principles ensure products are fit for purpose. A minority of the pupils are on an Increased Flexibility Programme linked to technical subjects but this is not a direct development of vocational work in design and technology.
165. Teaching and learning are very good overall with some outstanding teaching. Rigorous planning meets the needs of all pupils. Pupils expressed an appreciation of the marking and feedback on their portfolios that prompted critical thinking to improve their designs. There are few teaching assistants available to support design and technology and technical support has time restrictions. Where seen, for example in food technology, their contribution was well targeted and many pupils in the group benefited. Pupils with learning difficulties were in line with their individual education plans, often exceeding their targets, and carefully monitored through the department's tracking sheet. Assessment criteria are known by pupils and are an important aspect of celebrating success. The purposeful involvement of pupils through group work and class feedback within the lesson shows how well the assessment for learning initiative is being embedded in teaching to aid improvement.
166. Leadership and management are outstanding because teamwork is strong. Class work and homework are relevant and challenging. Strategic planning is very effective and links very well with the school improvement plan. Performance management and lesson observations are in place to monitor the quality of education in design and technology. Department meetings have a very clear focus on learning and creativity to challenge problem solving for the 21st century.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge
- Very good attitudes of pupils contribute positively to their learning, enabling them to achieve very well
- The quality of leadership and management of the department is excellent
- Marking and assessment are used extremely effectively

Commentary

167. In 2004, by the end of Year 9, pupils were working at a level well above that expected nationally according to teacher assessments and this was supported by work seen during the inspection. GCSE results have been consistently high since the last inspection and were

significantly above the national average for girls and for all pupils in 2004, with three times the number of A* grades awarded nationally.

168. According to work seen during the inspection, pupils in Year 9 are working well above the level expected nationally. Pupils in Year 11 are working at a standard that is high, with some outstanding work being produced by the highest attaining pupils. This represents very good achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, and is due to a consistent standard of teaching that is very good overall, with the teaching seen ranging from good to excellent.
169. The quality of drawing, painting and three-dimensional work in clay, wire and plaster, and pupils' knowledge and understanding about the work of artists, improve rapidly during Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, the highest attaining pupils produce stunning compositions, as in the oil pastel drawings inspired by distorted reflections and finely modelled clay interpretations of these drawings. Computers are used throughout the course using advanced specialist software, which allows images to be manipulated to develop ideas successfully. The very good attitudes of pupils contribute positively to learning.
170. All teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use visual material and confident practical demonstrations to ensure that all pupils understand what to do. They are enthusiastic and work very hard to make pupils' learning enjoyable. They know their pupils well and use marking and assessment very effectively, as well as plenty of individual attention in lessons, to tell them how to improve. Teachers are very skilful in questioning and encourage pupils to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings about the work of artists and of their peers. This develops pupils' speaking and listening skills, increasing their use and understanding of subject-specific vocabulary and encouraging a reflective approach.
171. The success of the art department lies in the excellent leadership and management of the subject leader who ensures that teachers work successfully together as a cohesive team and are kept up to date in their training needs. A well-qualified technician who is deployed effectively and who makes a significant contribution to the smooth running of all areas supports them.
172. Pupils have many opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities. These include clubs after school to complete coursework, life drawing classes and photography classes for gifted and talented pupils. Visits to London galleries and trips abroad to major cities inform and inspire pupils' work. Prolific displays of outstanding work greatly enhance the school environment.
173. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. High standards have been maintained and the quality of teaching has risen. There are more opportunities to use computers as well as excellent facilities to teach photography in a new suite of rooms adjacent to the art department.

Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range and standard of public performances and extra-curricular opportunity are exceptional
- Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and all teaching contains excellent or very good features
- Accommodation and resources are outstanding
- The new head of department provides inspiring leadership through his infectious enthusiasm and modelling of a professional music making approach

- Year 9 timetable arrangements lead to a lack of continuity for some pupils who go on to take music at GCSE in relation to composing work

Commentary

174. Pupils in Year 7 come to the school with performance, listening and composing skills that are at least in line with expectations and make very good progress. Those who are gifted and talented in the subject and those that have instrument lessons make outstanding progress. Teacher assessments are in line with national definitions and show student attainment to be above the national average at the end of Key Stage 3. Very musically talented pupils make very good progress and many attain high national curriculum levels. Examination results at GCSE are above expectations, however, work seen in Year 10 and 11 is well above expectations.
175. Teaching is good or very good in key stage 3 and all lessons contain very good or excellent features. In Year 10 and 11, all teaching is very good with many excellent features. In the main school, pupils of all abilities make very good progress because of excellent relationships between teachers and pupils. A wide range of appropriate and challenging teaching methods are used and these result in an outstanding level of independent learning. Learning is very good because teachers pay particular attention to detail and have high expectations in relation to participation and performance.
176. The National Curriculum is fully covered by the department and performing, composing and listening are often integrated into lessons. This results in the effective acquisition of a wide range of music skills and knowledge. In Years 7 and 8, the range of styles studied is very wide and includes world music, classical, jazz, popular music and contemporary music. Pupils in Year 10 are able to participate in London Symphony Orchestra workshops and Year 11 pupils do a music theatre project. Excellent use of made of ICT equipment and all pupils use sequencing and other software to compose and record work. Video is used in assessment and this is a strength that reinforces learning and pupils' progress.
177. Performance and extra-curricular opportunities are outstanding and the number of pupils who take instrument lessons has increased significantly during the last year. Pupils who take instrument lessons are encouraged to integrate these skills in lessons and this has a positive impact on all pupils in Years 7 to 11. The 23 visiting instrument teachers provide excellent learning opportunities for those that wish to learn an instrument and many pupils participate in the impressive range of ensemble, orchestral and choral opportunities. Overall, the department makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils in the school.
178. Accommodation and resources are now excellent and include a computer suite, recording studio and large rehearsal and performance space. The department has also kept use of its previous building and uses this for practice rooms and instrumental lessons. Alongside the new provision, the old building has been a key element in the expansion of instrumental provision and in raising standards quickly this year. Since the last inspection there has been no improvement in the current allocation of lessons in Year 9 and because of this some pupils' experience of music is still interrupted. This has an impact on the department's ability to build on previous learning for some pupils; however, coverage and attainment are still well above average in work seen.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good

- Teachers are very supportive and are confident in their subject knowledge
- Pupils' evaluative skills are well developed and they express themselves well

- Key Stage 4 assessment is not sufficiently developed
- Accommodation on-site is poor and consequently curriculum time is wasted travelling to facilities off-site

Commentary

179. Standards on entry to the school are average with some individuals achieving above average standards in specific activities. By the end of Year 9, in 2004, the number of pupils achieving Level 5 or above was 94 per cent. This represents very good achievement but, after observation of Year 10 and discussions with staff, the teacher assessment appears to have been over-generous. In gymnastics, pupils create skilful sequences with precision and good timing. In games, they have a good grasp of basic skills and are able to apply tactics. During Years 7 to 9, two written assignments are set each year to be completed in non-curriculum time; these take the form of guided research. Presentation is good showing confident use of word processing. Standards seen are overall above average and achievement is good. By Year 11, skills are more refined, technical vocabulary is used well and peer coaching is effective. In dance, high standards of performance are expected, challenging all pupils who respond well and make good progress. All Year 10 pupils are entered for AQA units where they are externally assessed and they achieve considerable success. This continues in Year 11, but facilities constrain the number of options available. Recording achievement in Years 10 and 11 proves difficult because many activities are instructed by specialists at off-site venues. Where this occurs, regular oral feedback is given. Pupils with special educational needs in all years achieve equally well. Standards of work seen are good, as is achievement.
180. Teaching and learning are good. The improved quality of teaching combined with the use made of assessment have led to a more positive approach to learning. Pupils take increasing responsibility for their own learning because teachers provide them with a secure base and have high expectations. Pupils are able to lead class routines and organise and adapt in games situations. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives conveyed to the pupils. Health and safety issues are embedded in the planning and sport is encouraged as a lifelong pursuit. Teachers give a high level of support and create an environment where all pupils, regardless of ability or background, feel valued for both effort and achievement.
181. Assessment occurs at the end of each unit of work in the form of teacher records, videoed work and written evaluation of own and others' work. Targets are set and information is gathered to identify achievement, motivate pupils and inform teaching. Pupils know their levels and how to improve. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, held at lunchtimes and after school, with good levels of participation.
182. The department is effectively led and the day-to-day management is good. The head of department designate is well supported by the leadership team and by an advisory teacher who spends one day each week in school. The acting head of department is competent and learning fast; she is most enthusiastic with clear ideas about how the department should develop.
183. Good progress has been made since the last inspection with all elements of the National Curriculum now covered. The school has done its best to provide good off-site facilities often with specialist coaching but travelling does take important curriculum time. In Years 10 and 11, the timetabled curriculum time of one hour twenty minutes is below the recommended two hours, but high participation in extra-curricular activities does provide additional opportunities for pupils to enjoy sport and improve their skills.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

184. **Personal, social and health education** was sampled within tutorial periods. These occur at the same time and included a mixture of citizenship and personal, social and health education themes.

185. Two lessons were seen in Year 9 covering aspects of sex education. In one lesson about the male body – the topic caused much excitement and the pupils reported that they were normally ‘more sensible’ – the objectives of the lesson were clear, the lesson was well planned with good resources. Pupils achieved well, displaying a sharpness of perception. They spoke without embarrassment and asked questions freely. In another lesson, concerning issues of female sexuality, the teacher made effective use of a true/false quiz. The teacher dealt with matters with sensitivity and pupils demonstrated clear respect for the thoughts and feelings of others. The teacher encouraged, supported and challenged all pupils and all pupils made good gains in understanding. The quality of teaching in both lessons was good. The sex education lessons clearly built on work that had been carried out in Year 8. The pupils’ folders indicated a range of work including for example, drugs education, rights and responsibilities, individual differences, a personal, social and health education and citizenship log and the experience of a prison awareness day.
186. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils identified their academic achievements and contribution to the school and the wider community, ready to complete their personal statement and action plan. Teaching was good and the teacher was supported well by the head of year. The group contained a couple of challenging pupils and the teacher’s personal intervention with the two girls was both encouraging and enabling. In another Year 11 class there was a good lead into the writing of pupils’ personal statements, pupils were mature in their attitudes and responses and well motivated and clearly these factors were supported by the quality of relationship which existed between the teacher and pupils. Another similar lesson was not successful because of lack of teacher planning resulting in slow pace and underachievement
187. Overall, there is good provision for personal, social and health education although the quality of teaching seen in the sample of lessons was variable. There is a well-established personal, social and health education programme, which covers sex and health education as well as careers education, and work related learning.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils follow a planned course in citizenship education that includes personal, social and health education so the school provides what is nationally expected
- Good opportunities are provided to enable all pupils to participate in active citizenship
- Not enough is done to monitor the work of tutors and subjects to ensure effective teaching of the curriculum
- Not enough has been done to assess pupils’ achievement and progress and to report these to parents

Commentary

188. By Year 9, standards are average in relation to what is expected. This represents satisfactory achievement. Pupils are making gains in their knowledge and understanding of responsible citizenship. By Year 11, standards are also average. Pupils demonstrate a sound understanding of concepts such as rights and responsibilities and can relate these to their own and others’ experiences. Their achievement is satisfactory because they can apply their learning to new situations.
189. The school has a strong commitment to the provision of citizenship education and sees it as integral to pupils’ personal development. Citizenship education is taught within the personal and social development programme by form tutors. It is partly supported by related themes and topics covered in other subjects, especially in the humanities subjects who make a significant contribution. However, insufficient time is allocated in order to ensure that

citizenship is fully developed. There is little identification of the subject and some pupils are unclear whether or not they are studying citizenship. Pupils have additional opportunities to develop an understanding of responsible citizenship and the democratic process through activities such as the school council. Many opportunities are currently provided within the wider community for pupils to participate fully in active citizenship.

190. It was only possible to see a small amount of citizenship teaching during the inspection. However, in many subjects, the range of teaching styles and concentration on the development of communication skills enable pupils to develop an independence of thought, feelings and actions. In addition, many aspects are developed very effectively through the school's ethos, expectations and wider enrichment and extra-curricular provision, as well as through the formal curriculum. Not enough has been done to assess and record pupils' achievement and progress in citizenship in Years 7 to 9. In addition, the school does not currently provide an annual report to parents on the progress pupils are making in the subject.
191. The subject leader has a clear vision for the subject. Monitoring of the work of the subject is not sufficiently developed in order to ensure consistency in the teaching. Satisfactory progress is being made in the development of citizenship and this provides a firm base for further improvement.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 16 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	29	100	78.3	37.9	21.6	41.0	28.5
Biology	11	90.9	63.5	18.2	10.4	34.5	19.8
Chemistry	6	83.3	70.3	16.7	13.2	25.0	23.0
Classical Studies	7	100	89.1	57.1	36.0	42.9	36.5
Communication Studies	7	85.7	87.2	57.1	24.9	41.4	32.8
English Literature	9	88.9	86.2	44.4	17.4	43.3	29.7
French	9	100	79.8	66.7	19.4	45.6	28.2
General Studies	15	100	73.6	80.0	16.9	52.7	25.5
History	10	100	82.2	40.0	20.8	43.0	29.2
Mathematics	9	88.9	59.9	33.3	14.1	36.7	20.5
Music	7	100	79.8	14.3	16.9	35.7	27.5
Other Social Studies	12	75.0	67.8	16.7	15.1	30.0	23.2
Physics	5	100	66.4	20.0	14.8	42.0	22.4
Sociology	9	100	72.1	33.3	19.6	38.9	25.9
Spanish	4	100	77.1	0.0	17.0	30.0	26.5

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	66	100	98.3	77.3	50.2	101.5	87.1
Biology	20	100	96.6	75.0	40.0	98.0	79.3
Chemistry	16	100	97.7	68.8	50.0	100.0	85.7
Classical studies	22	100	99.6	90.9	58.1	108.2	92.8
Communication studies	8	100	99.2	62.5	40.4	90.0	83.5
Drama	17	100	99.6	88.2	42.8	109.4	85.1
English Literature	84	100	99.4	67.9	44.9	98.1	85.5
French	19	100	99.0	68.4	53.1	101.1	88.9
Design and Technology	8	100	97.8	75.0	35.0	100.0	77.9
Geography	12	100	98.8	41.7	46.4	85.0	85.2
History	51	100	99.0	76.5	45.6	100.8	85.1
Home Economics	6	100	97.8	50.0	43.0	86.7	80.4

Mathematics	32	96.9	96.8	71.9	56.6	96.3	89.5
Music	18	100	98.2	44.4	37.1	84.4	79.5
Other social studies	48	100	97.4	70.8	42.5	100.4	81.6
Physics	13	100	96.7	46.2	45.3	89.2	82.6
Religious Education	3	100	99.1	100	49.5	106.7	87.4
Sociology	17	100	98.5	70.6	45.3	97.6	84.6
Spanish	7	100	98.2	42.9	53.5	88.6	88.7
Business	40	92.5	91.6	20.0	24.1	56.5	67.9
IT VQ	12	100	88.3	33.3	26.9	74.2	67.8

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

The focus of the inspection was on English literature. **Media studies** was sampled. Results in 2002 in media were high but were a little lower in 2003. However, they remain above the national expectation. In an observed lesson, achievement was very good and standards in film-making very high, with very good techniques and sensitivity in the content. Teaching and learning are good, because of the clear direction given by the teacher, strong relationships between teacher and students and the students' willingness to discuss difficult concepts openly. All students demonstrated their applied knowledge and critiqued their own and one another's work. All students achieved well, developing their understanding through speaking, listening and visual stimuli.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' high expectations and excellent subject knowledge lead to very good achievement
- Students work independently, collaboratively and constructively to develop their own learning
- Relationships between teachers and students are very strong, allowing students to extend and build upon their ideas
- The very good leadership of the department encourages high professional standards in planning and teaching
- Marking and assessment of pupils' work are detailed and give precise targets for improvement

Commentary

192. Standards at A level and AS are high compared with the national average. Over the last three years, the majority of students were awarded the higher grades. The trend over the last three years has been for results to be similarly high. Retention of students and the numbers taking English literature are very high. Standards seen in this inspection in Year 13 are well above average.

193. Achievement is very good because of the quality of teaching and the excellent response of the majority of students. They work hard and their learning is good. All students are encouraged to contribute very well in class, and independent, collaborative working is a strong feature of lessons. Students demonstrate the capacity to take control of their learning, to question, to comment and to develop their ideas through reading, writing and oral work. Listening skills are excellent, and students are encouraged to give very good constructive feedback to their peers, which is received well and acted upon. Teachers continually prompt and support

students in their learning, enabling students to identify for themselves nuance of language and technique. Poetry inspires a particularly high level of response and the highest attaining students show a real appreciation of the work of *Shakespeare*, *Blake*, *Keats* and *Larkin* because of the skilful management of class discussion.

194. Written work is sustained, well expressed and makes very good reference to the texts. For the most part students demonstrate through their written work very good sensitivity and perception as well as analytical skills and technical expertise.
195. Students are given a very good induction into the sixth form course and, throughout, very clear information about examination board requirements. Assessment is very effective, work is marked very carefully and comments give clear advice on strategies for improvement. Students value highly the feedback they receive from teachers on their work, both written and oral: they listen to and act upon this advice. Communication skills are excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and experience in teaching at this higher level, and know their students' needs very well.
196. Boys bring an added dimension to the lessons and this is recognised by staff and students alike. They contribute equally to the lessons and rarely dominate. For some the immersion in the feminine perspective is a little daunting but they hold their own, and acknowledge the quality of the teaching and the learning environment. All students value the freedom to learn independently in a safe environment, and articulate it clearly.
197. Students benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as visits to plays, a creative writing club and discussions with world-renowned authors. They also work with the younger pupils in reading and drama club.
198. Very good departmental leadership and management ensure that standards remain high and that resources are developed well. The department is developing the use of interactive whiteboards in lessons, and there is good provision for use of computers. New, spacious accommodation makes a very pleasant environment in which to learn.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

199. The intellectually ambitious nature of the sixth form derives from its very strong language foundation. The features present in the main school are even more apparent in the work of the sixth form. There is a 'press' across the sixth form for rigour of thought and expression within classrooms and opportunities for high-level debate. Students have an aura of confidence, which stems from the fact that they know that their contributions will be at least valued by the teacher and peers alike. Teachers are skilled at questioning – they seek clarification and evidence and alternative views. Students are encouraged to test the implications of what they have put forward. They are encouraged to make links with their other learning but above all, there is recognition of the precision of language. Students speak highly of support given to writing skills on transition from GCSE to A-level, particularly with essay structure and writing practice. Individual departments provide significant help in this regard. The enrichment programme provides plentiful opportunities for students to put forward their ideas, and examples were seen where individual students argued a point of view with remarkable poise and cogency.

Modern foreign languages

The focus was on French. **Spanish** was sampled. In Spanish, results at A level in 2004 were high. Of the seven students entered all met or exceeded their target, and all attained grade C or above. Teaching and learning are very good overall. In one of the lessons observed, students discussed fluently issues of crime and punishment. This resulted from lively and very well planned teaching with a focus on extending vocabulary and structures. Achievement was very good because the range of tasks were matched to individual needs.

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good
- Listening and speaking skills are developed through the use of French during the lessons
- ICT is used for independent research and to develop reading skills
- Students are given individual advice about how to improve
- Schemes of work are incomplete and lack detail

Commentary

200. In 2004, results at A level were well above the national average. Nearly three-quarters of the students gained an A or B grade and all either achieved their target grade or exceeded it. As only a small number of boys were entered for the examination, a comparison of their performance with that of the girls is not valid. However, at AS level, where a third of the candidates were boys, they were outperformed by the girls who achieved a higher proportion of the top grades. Overall, there was a slight drop in performance from 2003.
201. Standards seen on the AS and A level courses are well above average. In Year 12, students develop skills in understanding long and complex text and in using material from recorded interviews to express their own opinions clearly and in detail. In Year 13, they can use their powers of analysis to examine French books and write at length about the characters.
202. The achievement of students in Years 12 and 13 is very good. They enter the sixth form with top grades at GCSE and rapidly move to learning complex grammar. They describe people and evaluate relationships, engage in a debate about the value of boarding school education and analyse the films of *Truffaut*, which form the basis of preparation for the AS speaking examinations. They were observed working in groups to discuss issues raised by the teacher from a short clip of the film, and then holding a class discussion in which the majority spoke fluently and with a mature interest. In Year 13, students write essays about topical issues such as French attitudes to the environment and use the Internet to research *Camus* in preparation for A level coursework.
203. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 12 and 13. The teachers are native speakers of French and they plan thoroughly to meet individual needs, including those of bilingual students in the group. They use French effectively, encouraging students to participate in discussions through group work. They present topics in a challenging and enthusiastic manner, insisting on high standards of accuracy and pronunciation. They demonstrate how to present argument and mark work in detail with advice about how to improve. Students have very good attitudes and respond well, particularly in collaborative work. They rapidly gain confidence in communication and analytical skills and by Year 13 can work successfully on their coursework topics. Their spirit of enquiry leads them to raise issues in lessons and teachers have the linguistic competence to redirect work as necessary. They develop a good insight into French culture and begin to examine issues in an international context.
204. The quality of leadership and management is very good. Although the schemes of work are at a developmental stage and lack detail, overall strategies are in place and teachers work together effectively as a team. Students are well informed about the requirements of the courses and there is a clear focus on examination skills. Provision is made for individual speaking practice with the French Language Assistant and for support in coursework preparation with teachers.

205. Improvement since the last inspection is good. There has been a small increase in uptake over recent years and courses have been enriched by the professional development of the staff.

Classical courses

Latin, Greek and classical civilisation courses are available as A level subjects. The provision for students in the sixth form is **very good** in all these subjects.

The head of department (who is currently away on maternity leave) manages the subject very well. She has created an effective team and monitors teaching and learning effectively. Latin and classical studies are taught within the normal timetable but Greek is taught in sessions before the start of the school day. This reflects the enthusiasm and commitment of both staff and students. Students are supported well, and their individual needs taken into account. The subjects attract a small but significant number of AS and A2 level students each year. There are extra-curricular visits, especially to dramatic productions and lectures, as well as the British Museum. There have been trips abroad also, but the last of these was in 2002. These both raise awareness of the subject and enrich the curriculum. There is a good stock of textbooks in the library for students who wish to do research. Resources are adequate for effective teaching of the subject. Five teachers share the teaching of these subjects. They have very high expectations of all students. They use questions very effectively so that there is always an element of challenge in lessons. This helps to ensure that students are working at full stretch. The students respond very positively to this high level of teacher expertise. Relationships in the groups are excellent, and there is mutual respect between teachers and students. Students have positive attitudes to the subjects. They enjoy the opportunities to experience different cultures and explore moral and social dilemmas set in a different context. Many have a mature appreciation of how the study of the ancient world can illuminate current issues, while those studying modern foreign languages find the links - with Latin especially - a helpful resource.

Main strengths and weaknesses (for all areas)

- Teachers have an excellent command of the subjects
- Standards attained are consistently good
- A very good programme of visits to museums, productions of classical plays and lectures enriches the curriculum
- Very good relationships between students and teachers
- Teachers have very high expectations so that students work at full stretch
- The use of information and communication technology to support learning is less well developed than in many schools

Latin

206. In recent years, the standards attained at A level have been above average. In the last reported year, all students gained an A grade. The AS results last year were also very good, with two-thirds of the students gaining A grades. This is similar to the situation at the last inspection. The figures for small groups of students must be treated with caution, but the overall trend is one of well-maintained high standards. In the current Year 13, standards in Latin are well above average. Students achieve very well and the careful analysis of results by the head of department shows that most students exceed their target grades.

207. Several intend to study classics at university and find the range of language, literature and culture that the subject contains, very satisfying. Last year three students gained places at Oxford or Cambridge to read classics. All the A level students express very positive attitudes towards Latin. In a very good lesson on a comedy by *Plautus*, students showed a high degree of insight into the characters and themes. They suggested ways that the play might be staged and how the characters would deliver their speeches. Students have a very secure knowledge of the language - how verb and noun endings work, and the various ways of

translating conditional sentences. Teachers take opportunities to enhance the literacy skills of pupils by stimulating high level discussions about themes in literature and using technical vocabulary such as 'participle' and gerundive'.

Classical civilisation

208. In the last year the standards at A level were above average as were those at AS level, where all students attained grades between A and C. The subject attracts a large number of students (last year over 40 took A level and currently there are more than 20). Those who choose the subject come from a wide range of abilities. In the current Year 13, standards in the subject are above average and students achieve very well because of the very good teaching.
209. Students study a wide range of topics and many develop an ability to compare different cultures in a confident way. Teaching encourages students to see how Roman poets such as *Virgil*, refer to the *Odyssey* and Greek tragedies in their work. Consequently, students become more aware of the way that allusion and resonance heighten the effectiveness of literary works. In a very good lesson for students in Year 13, they compared the treatment of how Odysseus left Calypso (in the *Odyssey*) with the way that Virgil described Aeneas leaving Andromache in the *Aeneid*. This approach contributes significantly to the moral and social development of students. The teacher also gave excellent guidance as to how students should approach examination questions so as to attain the best possible grade. A very good lesson on the iconography of Greek vases stimulated lively discussion on the way that painting of drapery and figures became more naturalistic. This made a good contribution to their cultural development. Although the teacher encouraged one group to research a topic on the Internet, this resource is less widely used than in other subjects in this school.
210. The subject also deepens students' understanding of moral and spiritual issues. In a lesson in Year 13 on the *Medea* of *Euripides*, students discussed the role of women in ancient society. Many students made mature and thoughtful comments. There was also some very good discussion about the relationship between gods and mortals in the ancient world.

Greek

211. In the last reported year A level standards were very well above average with all students attaining an A grade. This was also the case in the A2 exams, although the small numbers involved make it necessary to treat apparent trends with caution. Standards seen in lessons and written work during the current inspection are of similar very high quality. Students achieve very well because of very good teaching. Teachers have a high level of competence in the language, and their own good pronunciation acts as a model for students to emulate. Students have developed a rigorous analytical approach to translation and their very secure command of both regular and irregular endings helps them to make the most of this. Teaching is always stimulating and challenging so that students aim for high personal standards. Teachers are also skilful at giving helpful pointers without lowering the element of challenge in the lesson. In a very good lesson for a group in Year 13, students showed a growing awareness of the way that a thinker like *Socrates* had a profound influence on his acquaintances. This made a very effective contribution to their moral and cultural development, as it stimulated discussion about modern parallels. They also recognised the way that similes and imagery added to the effectiveness of *Plato's* descriptions. There is no software available on the school system that students could use to write in the Greek alphabet and this limits the use that is made of information and communication technology to support learning.

MATHEMATICS

The focus of the inspection was on AS and A2 mathematics. Further mathematics was sampled. The provision for further mathematics is flexible and the school works hard to ensure that the few students who wish to do so are able to study the subject at either AS or A level. Results in 2004, for a small number of students, were well above average. In an observed lesson, students were fully committed to their course and benefited from the teacher's very good subject knowledge.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good
- Students' attitude to learning is very good
- Some students fail to achieve their target grades, which are based on their previous attainment

Commentary

212. Standards are above average and rising. Most students who enter the sixth form attain a pass grade at AS level by the January of Year 13. Similarly, most students who go on to take the A level usually attain at least a pass grade by the end of Year 13. The 2004 results were a significant improvement on previous years. A high proportion of students attain either a grade A or B, with most attaining grades A to C. Of those who began a mathematics course, in 2004 only two students completed Year 13 without gaining a pass. This is an improvement on previous years. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
213. Standards observed in lessons and in students' work during the inspection are above average. Students benefit from the very good support of their teachers who monitor progress and help them improve their understanding. Students are very motivated, demonstrating very good application and working very hard. They are independent learners and are confident enough to seek both clarification and help. Students are particularly strong at helping each other.
214. Achievement is good overall. Students enter into the subject with at least a grade B in mathematics at GCSE. They make good progress and achieve well. In 2004, 35 students entered for the A level examination at the end of Year 13 (52 had taken the AS level earlier in the year). Twenty-five of these either achieved or exceeded their target grade, which was based on their prior performance. Some did not.
215. Teaching and learning are good. Relationships between teachers and students are good. The ethos for learning is positive. Students benefit from their teachers' very good subject knowledge. Teachers encourage all students to succeed and a great deal of individual support is given. Students are expected to work hard and to contribute to discussion. Sometimes not all are fully involved in lessons. Varied methods are used in lessons. Students are productive. Good use is made by teachers of information and communication technology. Students work at their own pace on coursework, with effective teacher support. There is good access to resources to support learning, including computers.
216. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Since the last inspection, resources, including those for information and communication technology, have improved. Effective use is made of performance data. The time given to the subject has increased in Year 12 in order to ensure better preparation for examinations. The potential for further improvement is good.
217. In order to develop the subject further more students could achieve their target grades in both AS and A levels, and there is the capacity for more students to take up the very successful further mathematics course.

Mathematics across the curriculum

218. Students have well-developed mathematical skills and use them effectively in subjects such as advanced biology. The teaching of the specific mathematics required is given high priority in science and design and technology.

SCIENCE

Biology

The focus was on biology. **Chemistry and physics** were sampled. A level results in chemistry were well above average in 2004 and above average in physics. In the physics lesson observed, teaching and learning were good and the standard of students' work seen was in line with average. The standard of work seen in chemistry was well above average but no teaching was seen.

Biology

Provision in biology is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weakness

- Teachers' subject expertise and their high expectations make a strong contribution to teaching and learning being very good
- Students have a very positive attitude to learning and excellent relationships with their peers and staff and are confident as independent learners
- The leadership and management of the subject are excellent, with clarity of vision for future developments
- The effective support of the learning mentor has enhanced the achievement of some students

Commentary

219. A2 results were very high compared with the national average in 2004, and AS results were well above average. All Year 13 students who sat the 2004 examinations gained grade E or better, three-quarters gaining grade A or B. The boys did better than the girls. The number of students obtaining higher grades in the 2004 examinations has risen rapidly compared with 2003, which shows very good achievement.
220. The standards of students' work seen were also very high compared with the national average and their achievement is very good. Students use biological terms confidently and correctly, showing good knowledge of the subject. For example, Year 13 students explained the interaction between antibodies and antigens in detail, using the correct vocabulary. Students also have very good skills when completing practical work. For example, Year 12 students confidently used equipment to complete an assessed experiment. Students set up their equipment, recorded their results and explained patterns using scientific ideas with limited guidance from the teacher. Students' written work is also of very good quality with well-developed use of mathematical skills.
221. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which makes them skilled at enabling students to understand new scientific concepts. Lessons are carefully planned and build on students' existing knowledge and skills. Teachers respond expertly to individuals' difficulties with explanations that help each student to make very good progress.
222. Lessons are taught at a good pace and students have the confidence to raise questions to check their own understanding. Students are also encouraged to develop independent study skills and to assess the work of their peers. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, the teacher set

homework that required students to read background information and prepare a PowerPoint presentation to explain the concept of photosynthesis. During the presentations, students questioned each other's ideas and the teacher identified and addressed students' misconceptions. Marking is thorough, with diagnostic comments to advise students how to improve their work and marking criteria is shared with students.

223. Relationships between students, their peers and staff are excellent. Students discuss their ideas freely with each other and are prepared to identify issues openly. Teachers have progress meetings with students after assessing their work to ensure they are supported and able to achieve their target grade. Excellent support and guidance are given by a learning support teacher which is raising the attainment of potentially vulnerable students who could otherwise underachieve.
224. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent, with a clear vision for the development of the subject. Students' assessment data is tracked and used to diagnose their learning needs throughout the duration of the course. A detailed long-term curriculum plan is in place, which identifies the topics in the syllabus to be delivered, and newly qualified teachers are supported by an external specialist coach. Students are supported in practical lessons by a team of technicians and enrichment activities, such as trips to scientific institutions and field trips, take place.
225. There was little specific reference to A level biology in the last report, but the evidence suggests that improvement since then is very good with standards rising, the subject being increasingly popular with students.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus in the inspection was the advanced vocational (AVCE) course.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and the number of students studying the subject have both increased because the AVCE courses are well matched to students' needs and capabilities
- Teaching is good because teachers plan well and have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and the course requirements
- The very good accommodation and resources provide a very good learning environment
- Curriculum provision is good with single and double award courses available
- Standards on entry to the courses are below those for most other subjects
- Students have confidence in their teachers and the courses

Commentary

226. Results in the 2004 AVCE and ASVCE examinations were in line with the national average. In 2003, they were below average. The subject's access policy means that students start the course with attainment below that for most other subjects. Students from within the school have not studied ICT for three years previously and consequently have below average skills. Standards seen during the inspection showed a wide spread but were broadly average by the end of Year 12 and higher in Year 13. Standards are rising and represent good achievement in both year groups.

227. In class, students are well motivated and have good independent study skills. Away from the classroom in the first half of Year 12, study habits were less good with unsatisfactory attendance and homework completion. Despite clear guidelines about expectations, much early work is below average and weak literacy skills result in portfolio work that lacks detail. With effective teaching and support, most students do make good progress and later work shows a significant improvement as seen for example in a sample of double award work. Contact with a local small business develops commercial awareness for students and provides a good setting for database coursework. Students show a good understanding of database principles but documentation of their work is still a weaker feature. Virtually all students from Year 12 in 2004 continued into Year 13 where standards continue to improve. Attendance seen was good and written work more detailed. Web page design is a strength with many students able to incorporate advanced techniques.
228. Teaching is shared between two specialist teachers and is never less than good. Much of students' progress is via independent learning tasks but good planning by teachers makes the learning objectives and assessment criteria clear so students can achieve well. Teachers use their very strong knowledge of the subject and the course requirements to support students and indicate how they can improve their work. Classroom relationships are very good. Students contribute willingly in class and they support each other well. Discussion showed that they have confidence in their teachers. They appreciate the helpful feedback on assignments so they know how to improve their work. Only a very few students wish to pursue a career in ICT with the others seeing it as a useful tool. The transition in learning styles from GCSE is well managed but lower-attaining students, particularly in Year 12, would benefit from more detailed, one-to-one support. All students feel that the courses meet their needs well and that they received good advice beforehand. The breadth of opportunity given by the single and double award courses was appreciated though numbers for the latter are relatively low.
229. Leadership and management of the course are very good. There is a team commitment to high standards and improvement. Results are analysed in detail and are used to inform planning. Hardware and software are of industry standard so students can achieve well. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching and resources are much improved. Advanced courses are now well established with standards rising to above average in Year 13.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

230. Students show good competence in using ICT. There is much use of the Internet for research, word processing for assignments as well as spreadsheets and PowerPoint for presentations. Provision is excellent in music and also design and technology. Students use the very high quality resources with imagination, skill and confidence. Good practice was seen in several other subjects but the currently unsatisfactory resources in business studies hinder achievement.

HUMANITIES

231. The focus was on geography, history and religious education.
232. **Politics** was sampled. In the lesson seen, teaching and learning were good and students achieved well. Results in A2 level are very high and in the lesson observed and work seen, it is very clear that students' achievement is very good and the standards are improving further. Teaching and guidance are very effective in enabling students to learn very well by developing very good skills of analysing texts and sources collaboratively and preparing for examinations by evaluating their own and each others' work.

233. **Sociology** was sampled. One Year 13 lesson was sampled in which teaching was very good. Students are very well supported, for example by thorough assessment of their progress. Sociology has become a popular choice in the few years since it has been introduced and results have been very good.
234. **Philosophy** was sampled. Results were above average in 2004. In the lesson observed, teaching, learning and achievements were very good. This was because the students took control of their own learning because of the enabling style of the teacher.
235. **Critical thinking:** In the critical thinking lesson sampled, teaching, learning and achievement were very good. Students were actively involved in their own learning and demonstrated a wide range of higher order skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The teaching is well supported by a comprehensive scheme of work that is well linked to the AS level examination syllabus.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good
- Students achieve very well and develop as independent learners
- Very good support is provided for students
- Lessons take place in too many different rooms

Commentary

236. In the last three years, results in A level examinations have overall been in line with the national average. In 2003, they were above average because the attainment of boys was well above average. In the other years, there was no consistent difference in the performance of girls and boys. All students have attained at least a pass grade. Students at present in the sixth form are achieving very well. The standard in Year 13 is again above national expectations; in the AS examinations in 2004 well over half of this year group attained grades A or B.
237. Nine of the 14 students in Year 12 joined the school in the sixth form. Students spoke highly of the support which helped them to settle quickly. They particularly noted that the guidance they received for coping with the extended writing required compared to GCSE work increased their confidence.
238. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subject and the requirements of the examination syllabus. Their enthusiasm engages students' interest. Students' concentration through the long teaching sessions is also sustained by careful planning which breaks learning into short, well-linked stages. Question and answer sessions benefit from very good relationships in the classroom so that all students are involved. Female and male students contribute equally in oral work. Teachers make the learning process clear. Reference back to prior learning and applying it to new situations reinforces concepts. The enquiry approach, which is fostered, and the very good use of regular homework assignments, together with the positive attitudes of students, mean that they develop well as independent learners. Students are guided to a range of resources and build up a comprehensive range of case studies. Learning is often shared between students; for example, through presentations, very effective paired enquiry and peer assessment of their answers. Teaching resources are very well prepared. An example of the emphasis placed on developing students' examination technique was seen in a Year 13 lesson on forest ecosystems in which a past examination question was used as a learning resource. Marking

of students' work is very thorough and helpful. Support is available on a regular basis outside lessons. Students found this valuable when writing up the individual investigations they carried out during the field week in Slapton.

239. Leadership and management are good. Students' progress is monitored carefully and there is thorough evaluation of the impact of teaching on learning. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. There has been an improvement in the quality of resources but the accommodation for teaching geography in the sixth form is poor. Lessons are timetabled in seven different rooms spread across three buildings so there is no central storage, resource or study area, resulting in additional stress for teachers.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are very high in AS and A2 examinations and students achieve very well
- Teaching is consistently very good because the teachers have very good command of their subject and a good understanding of their students' needs
- Popularity of history is demonstrated in the increasing take up of the subject and the retention rate is high
- Students work well collaboratively but there is a dependence on the teacher's support

Commentary

240. Standards achieved in 2004 in A2 and AS level examinations were well above the national average and in A2, the results at grades A and B are significantly above the national average of 45.6 per cent and a good improvement from 2003. Although more girls scored As and Bs, 46 per cent of boys achieved A grade compared to 23 per cent girls which is the national average for girls. Girls scored twice the national average in B grades at 52.6 per cent (26.8 per cent). The observation of work and learning in lessons during the inspection confirms these standards and a high level of achievement. Students' skills at interpreting examination questions and responding to them succinctly are highly developed. They know how to address questions on sources effectively displaying skills of analysing different points of view, making own judgements and presenting a balanced conclusion.
241. In a lesson observed in Year 12, students used their detailed knowledge and understanding of their study of Liverpool's Reforms and made very good contributions to their respective group work, focusing on issues such as Corn Laws, trade and finance and presenting their findings to others, backing up their arguments with evidence. They use appropriate terminology effectively such as industrialisation and urbanisation. Year 13 students demonstrated that they are becoming increasingly confident in analysing and expressing their views based on their own knowledge and deepening understanding of sources about Lloyd George's efforts to make Britain the 'Land Fit For Heroes' at the end of the First World War. They are building a very detailed understanding of the marking requirements of A level examinations to improve their own essay writing. In both years, the students are very keen and participate fully in their learning, but they depend on their teachers for additional support for resources for their written tasks.
242. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well to support the learning process, balancing group discussions with appropriate intervention to make clear the complexity and stages of the process and to consolidate and build on previous learning. They have good and friendly relationships with their students whom they know well and plan their lessons to meet their individual needs effectively. They engage them very well in discussions, helping them along by building on their knowledge and experiences particularly in relation to their essays and preparation for examinations. They monitor and evaluate students' work very well and

guide them on how to improve and students value their guidance. The teachers also provide opportunities for enrichment by trips to places of historical interest such as France 'In search of the French Revolution'. They also make very good links with their personal - spiritual, moral, cultural and spiritual development in their teaching. However, there are fewer opportunities for the development of their independent thinking creatively. This inhibits higher achievement for the most able and gifted and talented at the highest level, and especially for girls.

243. Leadership and management of history are good. There is a good system of monitoring and evaluation of students' work and relevant support is given to them for improving their performance. Accommodation is adequate and resources are good.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the AS level examination in 2004 were well above average
- Teaching is very good and contributes very well to students' achievement and enables students to learn independently
- Good assessment procedures ensure that students know what they need to do to improve

Commentary

244. Results in the 2004 AS level course were well above the national average. Over 70 per cent of students achieved A or B grades and 80 per cent achieved A to E. This represents very good achievement and demonstrates that standards are rising significantly. More students now opt for religious education in the sixth form.
245. Standards in the AS level course in Year 12 are well above average. Given average standards on entry into the sixth form, this represents very good achievement. Students demonstrate a very good understanding of philosophical and religious concepts. Students are able to produce well-structured and balanced arguments. Teachers challenge students to analyse material and form judgements about a range of philosophical and ethical issues. The teacher's very good use of discussion, and high expectations, contribute well to students' ability to think independently.
246. Standards in Year 13 A2 level are well above average. Students demonstrate their ability to use the language of ethics. Through the teacher's challenging and enabling approach, students use their skills of analysis to draw out ideas and to make distinctions between opinions, beliefs and facts. Discussion enables students to deepen their learning and respect the views of others. Their achievement is very good.
247. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have high expectations of students and, as a consequence, students have equally high expectations of themselves. Students develop their ability to investigate and interpret and this allows them to move quickly into the skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis. They achieve very well and make very good progress. Assessment of students' work is good, with helpful and supportive comments that enable them to know how to improve. The procedures provide a good basis for assessing what students know and understand.
248. Very good leadership and management of the subject ensure that students are provided with a full and rich curriculum. There were no examination courses at the time of the last inspection. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The subject makes a substantial contribution to the personal, spiritual and moral development of students. The number of students taking religious studies at advanced level has increased.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

The department has introduced product design at sixth form level. This embraces the areas of textiles and resistant materials. Food and nutrition is not available at A level. During the inspection lessons were seen at AS and A2 level across the two elements of product design,

Provision in sixth form design and technology is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are imaginative designers that take design risks to meet client needs
- Assessment is purposeful and challenges researching and thinking
- Expectations of work ethic and designing are very high
- Lack of technical support puts undue pressure on teaching time

Commentary

249. Standards in sixth form design and technology exude creativity, style and lateral thinking. In 2004, results were well above the national averages at A or B and all gained a grade in the A to E range. This represents very good added-value by the department especially because some pupils join the course with little designing and making experience and some with slightly lower grades than B – the normal baseline entry to sixth. Group sizes are increasing yearly and the retention of students from AS to A2 is good.
250. Achievement is high. Students and teachers are dedicated to refining their research planning and construction to a high level. They are challenged to ‘think outside the box’ in true entrepreneurial style. They use their client needs to guide their design and can distinguish between needs and wants; some students’ knowledge and reflection on finite resources and global issues are well informed by the quality of their primary and secondary research and support from their teachers and the library.
251. Learning is very good and often excellent; it is facilitated by teachers with deep knowledge of their subject and a passion for stimulating learning opportunities. The department is consistent in its use of a wide range of teaching styles to inspire creativity. Personal choice of product to meet the design brief has promoted worthwhile research that culminates in innovative designs. On occasions students are let down by interactive whiteboards that fail to work efficiently. Computers as an aid to designing and manufacturing, such as open access to PCs, computerised sewing machines and milling machine are used well and teachers’ personal confidence gives students the ability to try new programmes. The lack of technical support time impedes development because teachers and students spend inappropriate time sourcing and preparing materials. A part time ‘friend’ of the school is giving effective support to the department during the external examination period to ensure preparation of materials is efficient.
252. Leadership and management of the course are excellent. It is systematic in identifying need, as well as being rigorous, and challenging high-level thinking, planning and problem solving. Teachers’ share ideas and solutions and work in a consultant capacity to their teams of students. Storage and circulation for independent access are put under pressure as group sizes expand. Assessment, monitoring and feedback are a strength of A level work and students reported on the value of teacher evaluation. As many students choose to go on to a career in designing, a higher profile on careers options is highlighted in department thinking. Since the previous inspection, a good audit of the subject has highlighted strengths and weaknesses. These issues are part of high-level department meetings and are shared with the line manager who gives very good support to the development of the department.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and design. **Photography** was sampled. The provision in photography is excellent. The recently enhanced accommodation and resources are excellent, in that they are suited, spacious and very well equipped. Specialist teaching is excellent. Standards and achievement are well above average. Excellent student attitudes contribute positively to learning.

Art history was sampled. Small groups take art history, which makes national comparison difficult. Standards are around average and many students achieve as expected. The teaching observed was satisfactory. The subject teacher has good subject knowledge. Marking and assessment are not used well enough to inform students of their strengths and weaknesses.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have excellent specialist knowledge
- Excellent attitudes of students contribute positively to their learning, enabling them to achieve very well
- Excellent studio facilities and resources enable students to produce a high standard of work

Commentary

253. Both AS and A level results have been consistently high in recent years. Large numbers of students take art and it has become more popular year-on-year. All students are of a high calibre. From work seen during the inspection, they are all achieving very well due to consistently very good teaching and their own excellent attitudes that contribute positively to their work.
254. In Year 12, students are working at a level well above average and those in Year 13 are working at the highest level. The standard of drawing and painting is excellent in Year 13, with some stunning, large oil paintings being produced. These ideas have been documented and developed very well in original and inventive ways in journals, often supplemented by digital photographs. Students are able to use computers to develop their ideas, and many use PhotoShop skilfully to do this. It is clear that students draw on artists' work to inspire them and they discuss the connections confidently. Visits to London galleries and those in major cities abroad inform their work and provide a context in which to produce their own artwork.
255. Teachers use their excellent specialist knowledge and visual resources extremely well to ensure all students understand the connections between their own and artists' work. Assessment is used very effectively to inform students of their strengths and weaknesses and to ensure they know how to improve. They are encouraged to plan their learning independently and to become autonomous.
256. The work in the sixth form is so successful because of the excellent leadership and management of the subject leader, who ensures that open plan areas and groups that are shared are well organised and relationships harmonious, making the art studio a calm yet enormously stimulating place to work.
257. There are opportunities to enrich students' art experiences through trips, working out of lesson time in the studios and through the life drawing classes after school. The whole-school environment is enhanced enormously through the high quality sixth form work displayed throughout the school.

258. Since the last inspection, the studio space has been greatly enhanced. High standards have been maintained whilst numbers choosing to study art in the sixth form have increased by 70 per cent. Improvement has therefore been very good.

Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teacher subject knowledge is excellent and this extends beyond the academic to include performance and conducting skills
- Performance opportunities are exceptional and the standard of many performances is very high
- Accommodation and resources are outstanding
- The new head of department provides inspiring leadership through his infectious enthusiasm and all teachers model a professional music making approach

Commentary

259. Year 12 students begin their studies with attainment that is above expectations and make very good progress. Exceptional progress is made by the most talented, however all students make very good progress. Examination results last year were above the average. Standards are clearly rising because of a combination of inspirational leadership, excellent subject knowledge and the newly acquired outstanding resources and accommodation. Standards of performance are far ahead of the average and include performances of challenging contemporary classical works as well as jazz. A number of students go on to study music in higher education.
260. Students can write Bach Chorale harmonisation with a clear understanding of stylistic conventions and many are able to go beyond a basic understanding of formulae to discuss at a deeper level. This is the result of excellent teaching and, in particular, probing questions. Composition work is imaginative and draws on a range of styles. Composing coursework is supported by a composer-in-residence. Student understanding extends beyond their specialist examination topic and they have a detailed knowledge of a wide range of compositions including Jazz, *Schubert*, *Schoenberg*, *Webern*, *Cage*, *Berio* and *Shostakovich*.
261. Teaching and learning are excellent and lessons are characterised by excellent subject knowledge and outstanding relationships between students and teachers. There is an impressive and fluid pace to lessons, during which students are encouraged to ask probing questions to support their learning. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods that support the highly challenging yet supportive and calm classroom environment. During an analysis lesson, that covered music by *Shostakovich*, excellent use was made of ICT. In this lesson, new technology was very effectively integrated into classroom practice and this had a significant impact on achievement.
262. Extra-curricular opportunities are outstanding and students benefit from participation in the full symphony orchestra and choir as well as the many other ensemble opportunities. Recent performances have included *Haydn's* 'Creation', *Brahms'* 'Requiem' and *Bach* Brandenburg Concerto No.2. There is also a unique partnership with the London Symphony Orchestra. This has resulted in a number of workshop opportunities. The music department is an exceptional team and this was demonstrated during a performance and composition coursework lesson in which visiting instrumental teachers gave excellent support alongside the teaching staff.
263. Accommodation and resources have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now exceptional. These resources have benefited all students in the sixth form and include a digital recording studio. The department intends to make full use of this by offering music

technology alongside the current sixth form offer. Because of these improvements, the school is now able to provide an excellent grounding for students who intend to study the subject further or pursue a professional career as well as for those who just wish to enjoy studying the subject at a higher level.

Theatre studies - Drama

The provision in theatre studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations
- Standards are high
- Students work with maturity and strong commitment, enthusiasm and skill

Commentary

264. Standards are well above average. In 2004, A level results were in the top five per cent of the country with girls doing particularly well. Work seen in progress reflects these high standards.
265. During the inspection, students were preparing for the final practical assessment and the teacher, of necessity because of examination requirements, was not actively engaged in direct teaching. Nevertheless, the way students were working, their maturity, self-motivation and organisational skills gave clear evidence of very good teaching over time. Coursework seen showed detailed marking by the teacher focusing on the specifics and developing a rigorous analysis of the text being studied. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and uses this effectively to forge links with other work. Relationships are very good and lead to a very mature work ethic. It would be easy for the casual observer to think that they were watching a class in higher education.
266. Students are clearly very well motivated, enthusiastic and impressive. They work together very well, building effectively on each other's ideas. The teacher's detailed knowledge of the precise requirements of the examination syllabus ensures that students give full weight to appropriate sections of the work.
267. The subject is under the umbrella of the English department. Very effective use is made of an attached professional theatre worker. A number of students want to pursue the subject as a career whilst others clearly relish the mixture of personal academic challenge and co-operative creative work. A student, aiming to be a journalist, was very clear about why he was studying the subject, for him, 'theatre was as valid a way of analysing society as journalism'.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Subjects from this area were not inspected.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Business studies at AVCE level was inspected. Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average in Years 12 and 13
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and their experience of business is used to enhance learning
- Business links are being used well

- The administration of the course is effective but there have been staffing changes that have affected learning and achievement

Commentary

268. Performance in AVCE in 2004 was below the national average. This was a clear improvement on the previous year, when results were well below average. There are a few male students and there is no overall trend that shows any gender difference in achievement. Students can enter for double or single awards at AVCE. Although standards in the single award group are average, reflecting the higher standards on entry to the course, standards overall are below the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement overall as standards on entry are below or well below average. Few students have studied business before and for many English is an additional language. Entry requirements for AVCE courses are lower than for other advanced courses taught in the school.
269. Retention is good and most students adapt well to the demands of a higher-level course, although some fail to attend lessons regularly or punctually. Some students, particularly in Year 12, do not hand in work on time. Attitudes overall are satisfactory and a number of students intend to study business at university. The use of available ICT resources is effective but teachers are not able to model the high standards of presentations used in the business world because the department lacks the appropriate equipment. Students in both year groups show secure knowledge of basic business theory but lower-attaining students find difficulty with business terminology. Students who are using English as an additional language make satisfactory gains in knowledge because of good support in class and the provision of extra lessons.
270. Both teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching was good in lessons observed but both teaching and learning over time have been affected by staff changes. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to use experience in business to provide real examples. Students benefit from a range of business links and a recent visit to the Kings Cross regeneration project clearly helped their understanding of the different interests of pressure groups and developers. Learning was good in lessons observed because of the challenge and pace of work and the effective use of resources. Students are not taking a leading role in lessons although they work independently on their assignments and Year 13 students participate well in discussion. Assessment is effective. Teachers use questioning to assess understanding and they provide further support if students are not clear about key areas such as the relationship between supply and demand. Students have a clear understanding of the examination board criteria because this aspect of the course is well managed.
271. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting head of department administers the course efficiently; teachers work together well and essential new resources have been purchased. There is a good programme of visits and visiting speakers and information about students' progress is easily accessible. However, staff changes have affected learning and there is some lack of clarity about the future development of the department.
272. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, new courses have been introduced and the department has a good record of ensuring that most students get at least a pass grade because it has a good focus on key skills and the examination criteria.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

273. No subjects were inspected within this area.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

274. All sixth form students follow a high quality assembly and tutorial programme that incorporates personal, social and health education, study skills, economic, political and social awareness, and citizenship. The programme is well received by the students and adds considerable breadth to their sixth form experience.
275. It was only possible to sample two tutorial sessions.
276. Tutors prepared their tutor groups for an assembly debate on identity cards that mirrored the Parliamentary debate taking place at the same time. Students in both groups engaged purposefully with the task and the material provided in order to compose their ideas and both groups made progress in understanding the range of the issue. One teacher was particularly skilled in ensuring high levels of motivation and involvement so that students worked at a particularly demanding pace.
277. The resultant debate in the school hall was a positive exercise. Students were taken seriously and profited from the opportunity to air their views. Male and female students contributed equally. Whilst the quality of exposition varied, some students were very confident, using humour effectively, whilst others referred to notes, all showed respect for one another, listened to the views of others and were clearly familiar with the format of formal debates.

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		2
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	3	3
Overall standards achieved		2
Pupils' achievement	2	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)		1
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	1	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		1
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well pupils learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	3	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	2	2

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