

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE LATYMER SCHOOL**

Enfield

LEA area: Enfield

Unique reference number: 102055

Headteacher: Mr M Cooper

Lead inspector: Mr D Gosling

Dates of inspection: 24 - 28 January 2005

Inspection number: 268976

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1409
School address:	Haselbury Rd Edmonton London
Postcode:	N9 9TN
Telephone number:	020 8807 4037
Fax number:	020 8807 4125
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr I Pilsworth
Date of previous inspection:	15 - 19 March 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Latymer School is a selective, mixed school catering for pupils aged 11-18. It is bigger than other secondary schools and currently has 1409 pupils on roll, 710 boys and 699 girls. Admission to the school is based mainly on entrance tests and standards of the pupils on entry are very high. The school is very popular with parents in North London, with over 10 applications per place. Only about half the pupils live in Enfield. Overall, pupils' social and economic backgrounds are much more favourable than the national average, although a wide range of backgrounds is represented. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds and the proportion whose first language is not English is high, although none are at an early stage of learning English. Currently, 28 pupils have special educational needs, including one with a statement but the proportion is well below the national average. The special needs are mainly connected with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, though a small number of pupils have dyslexia. There is relatively low mobility of students. The school is involved in a number of initiatives, including Excellence in Cities, the Young Enterprise Scheme and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

With 468 students on roll, the sixth form of this 11–18 grammar school is much larger than other sixth forms. About 50 students join the sixth form each year from other schools. There is a broad balance between boys and girls and attainment on entry is very high. The proportion eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Nearly all students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form. Students follow a wide range A and AS Level courses and some take the Advanced Extension Award.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7118	D Gosling	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
14214	G Smith	Lay inspector	
27188	G Murray	Team inspector	English; sixth form English
17541	F Ashworth	Team inspector	Mathematics
30563	J Pentlow	Team inspector	Science
8052	K McKenzie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology; sixth form economics
20716	R Grogan	Team inspector	Religious education
11190	W Burke	Team inspector	Art; sixth form art
1489	P King	Team inspector	Design and technology
31333	K Grimwade	Team inspector	Geography
8096	N File	Team inspector	History; sixth form history
12408	A Frith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages; sixth form French
27665	A Lees	Team inspector	Music; sixth form music
18888	J Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education; sixth form physical education
23324	S Greenland	Team inspector	Citizenship; sixth form geography; special educational needs
19385	M Beale	Team inspector	Sixth form mathematics
15079	T Boys	Team inspector	Sixth form chemistry; sixth form biology
10759	L Bappa	Team inspector	Sixth form politics; sixth form religious education
4351	J Strickland	Team inspector	Sixth form media studies

The inspection contractor was:

PBM Brookbridge and Bedford Ltd  
PO Box 524  
Cheadle  
Staffordshire  
ST10 4RN

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The Latymer School is excellent, with many outstanding features, and it provides excellent value for money. Standards are very high compared with national averages in national tests for Year 9 pupils and in GCSE and A Level results. The school builds on the very high standards of the pupils when they join the school and their achievement is excellent. This is because teaching is challenging and often inspiring. Leadership of the school by the headteacher is excellent. An exceptional ethos has been created where staff and pupils not only strive for academic excellence, but also where learning is enjoyed and individuals are valued and supported.

The school's main strengths and weakness are:

- pupils' achievement is excellent and they have outstanding success in achieving the top grades at GCSE and A Level;
- teachers have a very high level of subject knowledge and enthusiasm and they make their lessons challenging and enjoyable;
- the headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and, with the support of his senior staff, has had outstanding success in achieving it;
- the pupils receive a very broad education through an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities and trips and this is contributing to the great success in university applications;
- individual pupils are valued and those experiencing difficulties are supported very effectively;
- more consistency is needed in monitoring and evaluating teaching and in the quality and use of assessment data for Years 7 to 9.

The school has made excellent progress since the last inspection. Standards have risen even higher, teaching has improved markedly, and the leadership has maintained and built on the school's strengths. The key issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed very well.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Overall, pupils' achievement is excellent.** It is very good in Years 7 to 9 and excellent in Years 10 to 11 and 12 to 13. It is not as strong in Years 7 to 9 because assessment is not used as well for tracking progress and for lesson planning as in later years. Current attainment is very high by the ends of Years 9, 11 and 13. The pupils have excellent skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and these underpin their academic success. The lowest achievement is in citizenship where it is at an early

stage of development and is satisfactory. Standards by the end of Year 9 are well-above national averages. The results in the end of Year 9 English, mathematics and science national tests in 2003 were very high compared with the national average and were well above average for grammar schools. In other subjects, standards are well-above national averages and achievement is very good overall. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades at A\*-C in 2004 was very high compared with the national average and with grammar schools. There was outstanding attainment at the top levels, with nearly half of the grades at A\*. The highest proportions of A\*s in 2004 were in business studies, religious education and history and the lowest in physical education, Latin and English literature. Current standards reflect the very high results of 2004. Achievement is at least very good in all examination subjects in Years 10 to 11, and in many it is excellent. A Level results were also very high compared with the national average in 2004 and they were comfortably in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. Attainment at the top level, as with GCSE, was excellent in 2004, with 60 per cent of the entries at grade A. **Pupils' personal qualities, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, are excellent.** Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes are excellent. They are very enthusiastic learners. They are eager to take on responsibilities such as running the well attended extra-curricular clubs and societies. Punctuality is good and attendance is very good.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is excellent. Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9 and excellent in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form.** The most notable strength of teaching is the way teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to inspire and challenge students. This is the key factor in explaining the excellent achievement at GCSE and A Level. Another key strength of teaching is the way teachers encourage pupils to think for themselves and explore ideas, rather than providing them with answers. The key area for development is more consistent targeting of different work in lessons to students at different levels in Years 7 to 9. There is an excellent pace of learning in lessons. Pupils enjoy lessons and they are very quick to respond to their teachers' assessments and guidance. The curriculum provides an appropriate range of courses which meets the needs of its very academic pupils. There are some effective innovative elements to the curriculum such as the teaching of learning skills in assemblies and tutor time and the recently introduced sixth form Critical Thinking course. The time allocated to physical education and religious education in Years 10 and 11, and citizenship throughout the school is only just sufficient. Statutory requirements are not met for religious education in the sixth form or for collective worship across the school. The school takes excellent care of its pupils and the advice and support provided, especially for the few pupils who have problems, are of a very high quality. Links with parents and the community are very good and they are excellent with other schools and colleges, particularly higher education institutions.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are very good overall.** The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. He has helped to create academic excellence, as well as establishing a learning community where individuals and learning are valued. He is very well-supported by an excellent leadership team and by excellent heads of year. Heads of department are very effective but the evaluation of teaching and the management and use of data in Years 7 to 9 are under-developed. The line management structure, a weakness in the last inspection, is now a strength. Governance is good. Governors know the school well but not all statutory requirements are met.

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

The school is very popular with parents. They like particularly the excellent standards, the range of extra-curricular activities, and quality and dedication of teachers. Pupils think they



are taught well and also appreciate the extra-curricular activities. A significant minority think that there is not an adult that knows them well but heads of year, form tutors and learning mentors have a very good knowledge of individual pupils and their needs.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- establish a more rigorous system of classroom observation so that excellent practice can be more easily identified and shared and a better overview of the quality of teaching established;
- ensure that teachers and heads of department make better use of National Curriculum Levels to set work and gain an overview of pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that there is provision for religious education in the sixth form and a daily collective worship for all pupils.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT THE LATYMER SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an excellent sixth form which meets the needs and aspirations of its students extremely well, with an appropriate range of courses. It is very cost-effective. Students achieve excellent results because they are highly motivated, very conscientious, have very good learning skills and experience excellent teaching. Examination results are excellent and have been for several years. The sixth form is excellently led and managed. The increase in roll has placed a strain on accommodation, but it is well used and is not constraining students' learning.

The main strengths are:

- standards at A Level are very high, with some outstanding attainment at the top grades;
- teachers have an excellent level of subject knowledge and they help students develop as independent learners;
- students receive excellent personal and academic support and guidance from a strong team of tutors, year heads and a deputy headteacher;
- students have excellent attitudes to learning and contribute well to the life of the school;
- the curriculum offered is very broad and meets the needs of academic students but statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship are not met.

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

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Excellent</b> in <b>English</b> where students learn with enthusiasm and confidence in response to teaching which is challenging and based on excellent subject knowledge. <b>Excellent</b> in <b>French</b> because of highly focused teaching accompanied by plentiful opportunities to speak and practise French outside the classroom.
Mathematics	<b>Very good</b> in <b>mathematics</b> as a result of sharply focused teaching and the students' high level of commitment and desire to succeed.
Science	<b>Very good</b> in <b>biology</b> and <b>very good</b> in <b>chemistry</b> because of the very good teaching and highly motivated and conscientious students.
Information and communication technology	There was no focus subject in this area.
Humanities	<b>Very good</b> in <b>geography</b> and <b>excellent</b> in <b>history</b> where independent learning is very effectively encouraged. <b>Excellent</b> in <b>government and politics</b> and <b>excellent</b> in <b>religious education</b> where teaching is very good and students are very enthusiastic.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	There was no focus subject in this area.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Excellent</b> in <b>media studies</b> in response to very good teaching and outstanding leadership and management. <b>Excellent</b> in <b>music</b> where students are highly motivated and where practical skills are fostered through the opportunities to perform. <b>Excellent</b> in <b>art</b> as a result of the highest quality teaching and learning.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<b>Excellent</b> in <b>physical education</b> where teaching and learning are very good and students' attitudes are excellent.
Business	<b>Excellent</b> in <b>economics</b> where teaching is excellent in a highly effective department.
Health and social care	There was no focus subject in this area.

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

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

**Provision is excellent.** Teachers ensure that students are very well cared for and this assists their excellent achievement. Teachers provide excellent support, guidance and advice for students and monitor their needs and personal development carefully. Students have excellent opportunities to express their views and opinions through year councils. Students' personal development is a very strong focus of the sixth form, for example through encouraging them to lead extra-curricular activities for younger students and support them in their learning.

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

**Leadership in the sixth form is excellent.** The vision for academic excellence, for rounded students who have a broad range of interests, and for valuing all students is achieved with outstanding success. **The sixth form is managed very well.** A strong management team has been created. The sixth form is cost-effective and has a good improvement plan with realistic and achievable targets. The analysis of data is very good and teachers have a very good grasp of what grades pupils are, and what they are capable of achieving. However, there is not a clear enough overview of the quality of teaching.

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

Students enjoy being in the sixth form. They recognise that their teachers have excellent subject expertise and that this is used to provide challenge within teaching. Students enjoy very good relations with their subject teachers and form tutors; they find them to be accessible and helpful. Their teachers help them to study independently and to engage in research, so enabling them to develop as learners and be well-prepared for higher education. Students report that they receive very good careers advice and excellent help applying for university. They feel fairly treated, and are known as individuals. They are proactive in the running of a range of activities and organisations in the school. There is a students' council through which their views can be heard and they regularly meet with the headteacher to discuss issues about the school.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

In 2004 the standards attained in the national tests for 14-year-olds and at GCSE were very high compared with the national average. The A Level results were also very high and were comfortably in the top 5 per cent of schools in the country. The achievement of pupils is excellent overall. Students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good and in Years 10 and 11 it is excellent.

#### **Main strengths**

- Standards attained at A Level are very high, particularly at the top levels, and nearly all students gain places at good universities.
- The more able pupils achieve particularly well, with a very high proportion gaining high levels in the national tests and A\* grades at GCSE.
- Pupils achieve exceptionally well across the range of subjects with no areas of significant weakness.
- Pupils have excellent skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and these are providing a foundation for academic success.
- Pupils who experience difficulties or are less advantaged achieve well at GCSE and A Level because of rigorous tracking of their progress and targeted support.

#### **Commentary**

1. The school has a well-deserved national reputation for academic excellence. The standards of the pupils on entry are very high. The school builds on these very successfully through excellent teaching, which encourages pupils to think for themselves, and by creating a community eager to learn. The school is also quick to identify underachievement and provide follow up support where it is needed. Parents and pupils are very happy with the standards achieved.
2. Compared with schools nationally, the results of national tests for Year 9 pupils were very high in 2003. National comparisons for 2004 are not yet available but provisional data suggests that results are again very high. All pupils gained five or more GCSE grades at A\*-C in 2003 and 2004 and this was again very high compared with the national average. All of the school's targets for national tests and GCSE results were met.
3. Despite these very high standards, the school is still trying to drive them even higher and the trend is one of improvement. In 2004 the Year 9 results improved overall, with a significant improvement to English results from 63 per cent of pupils gaining a Level 7 or above in 2003 to 89 per cent in 2004. At GCSE the proportion of pupils gaining A\*s improved from 43.8 per cent in 2003 to 48.9 per cent in 2004 and the proportion gaining A\* and A grades improved from 80.7 per cent to 83.8 per cent.
4. The achievement of pupils, taking into account the very high standards on entry, is excellent. When compared with other grammar schools, the 2004 Year 9 results in English, mathematics and science were well above average overall. Achievement is slightly weaker in Years 7 to 9 than in other year groups because the tracking of

pupils' progress is less rigorous and because there has been less of a focus on Years 7 to 9 from some departments. The proportion gaining 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C was very high compared with other grammar schools in 2003 and 2004. The national value-added system used to judge the progress of pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 and from Key Stage 3 to 4 in 2004 shows a very high proportion of pupils exceeding predictions. In 2003 the school was placed tenth nationally in the Key Stage 3-4 value-added scores.

5. The achievements of pupils in lessons and in their work confirm the picture presented by data. There is excellent progress in lessons, partly because of the ability, enthusiasm, and focus of pupils, but also because of inspirational and challenging teaching. The pupils achieve exceptionally well across a range of skills and subjects and they cover significant ground in lessons. They are very quick to understand points made by teachers, even when they are very complex.
6. Overall, there are no significant issues around the attainment of boys and girls. In recent years there has been minimal difference in performance between boys and girls at Year 9 and at GCSE. The girls have slightly outperformed boys at GCSE but the gap between girls' and boys' performance is much smaller than the national gap.
7. The more able pupils achieve exceptionally well at the school. In the 2003 Key Stage 3 tests, performance at Level 7 and above in mathematics was very high compared with other grammar schools; in English it was well above and in science it was above. In 2004 there was outstanding attainment at the higher levels in mathematics with 54 per cent of pupils gaining a Level 8. In the Foundation subjects the best achievement at the higher levels in 2004 was in history where 96 per cent gained Level 7 or above. The highest proportion of Level 8s at Key Stage 3 in 2004 was in geography, art and music. There is also exceptional performance at the higher levels at GCSE. In 2004, 83.8 per cent of the grades were at A\* or A, compared with 14.8 per cent nationally. The subjects with the highest proportion of A\*s in 2004 were business studies, RE and history. The subjects with the lowest proportion of A\*s were PE, Latin and English literature.
8. The achievement of pupils designated as having special educational needs is very good in the majority of subjects because teachers have a very clear understanding of how to help these pupils to reach their full potential. Pupils on the School Action Plus list frequently improve to the level where they can be removed from the list altogether.
9. The LEA analysis of the attainment of different ethnic groups shows little difference. The lowest achieving groups in 2004 were the pupils from African-Caribbean and Turkish backgrounds but there were only 3 pupils in each group and these all gained 5 or more GCSE grades at A\*-C.
10. In Years 7 to 9 pupils' achievement is excellent in music where there is outstanding work in performance and in composition. Achievement in other subjects is very good except for science where it is good. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is better across the range of subjects. It is excellent in music, modern foreign languages, history, design and technology, GCSE religious education and art and design. Achievement is very good in all other subjects except citizenship because the subject is not assessed and its coordination is at an early stage of development.
11. At the last inspection achievement in English was weaker than in mathematics and science. There were comparatively weak results in English national tests in 2003 but

in 2004 results rose dramatically and were the highest of the three subjects. At GCSE national data suggests pupils achieved less well in English and English literature than in other subjects, particularly in literature where there were comparatively few A\* grades. Attainment in English, however, is still very high at GCSE when compared with other grammar schools.

12. Pupils' competence in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills is excellent. Pupils write fluently and accurately and they can read and analyse complex texts. As well as having excellent basic number skills, they can use sophisticated statistical methods where required. Their word-processing skills and use of software to analyse data are also at a very high level.
13. Since the last inspection there has been a considerable improvement to standards and achievement, particularly at the higher levels.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	43.9 ( 42.8)	[n/a] (33.4)
mathematics	47.6 ( 48.5)	[n/a] (35.4)
science	42.7 ( 43.8)	[n/a] (35.6)

*There were 182 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	100 (100)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	59.3 (58.5)	34.9 (34.7)

*There were 186 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

**Sixth Form**

*(During the week of the inspection the Year 13 students were on study leave and judgements about standards in the sixth form are based on examination results, Year 12 lessons, samples of work from Year 12 and 13 students, and interviews with students in Year 13 about their work.)*

14. Attainment in the sixth form is very high and is a major strength of the school. In the last three years attainment has been very high compared with the national average and in 2004 was comfortably in the top 5 per cent of schools. There is a trend of improvement in results, with the average A-Level points score increasing from 369 in 2003 to 382 in 2004. The proportion of pupils gaining A or B grades rose from 83 per cent in 2003 to 87 per cent in 2004. In 2004 there was outstanding achievement at the top level with 60.8 per cent of entries awarded grade A – a 20 per cent increase on the previous year.

15. Attainment in all A Level subjects in 2004 was very high or well above average. Girls performed slightly better than boys in 2004 but the gap was smaller than the national gap and in 2003 results were very similar. The national value-added system used by the school does not show any weaknesses in attainment in any subjects at A Level. National data suggests that achievement in 2004 was strongest in biology, media studies, economics and French. In chemistry and physics A Level in 2003 and 2004 there was a lower proportion of high grades than the school average. Pupils from the range of ethnic backgrounds attain equally well.
16. A key aim of the school is for students to move into good higher education institutions and it has achieved this with great success. Nearly all students move on to the good universities and the school has a history of success in entrances to Oxbridge. In 2003, 25 students gained Oxbridge places and in 2004, 24 gained places. The school has been involved in the national Aim Higher initiative designed to provide extra support for students from less favourable backgrounds. Through this scheme 63 students from less-favoured backgrounds received additional support at school. Nearly all of these gained places at universities and 6 gained places at Oxbridge.
17. There are four key contributory factors to this excellent achievement in the sixth form. Teaching is excellent; students are highly motivated and receptive to learning; students have a very high level of basic English, mathematics and information and communication technology skills; and the tracking of students and the follow up of underachievement is very rigorous.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	99.8 (99.4)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	84.5 (80.4)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	382.7 (369.4)	265.2 (258.2)

*There were 233 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Punctuality is good and attendance is very good in the main school and the sixth form. Pupils have excellent attitudes to school and they are exceptionally well behaved. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent.

**Main strengths**

- Pupils of all ages are very proud of their school and their behaviour is excellent during lessons and around the school.
- Pupils and sixth form students are highly motivated and eager to participate fully in all aspects of school life.
- Pupils and adults get along very well and teachers' wholehearted support inspires pupils to aim high and achieve excellent standards in their work.
- Pupils are exceptionally enterprising and keen to take responsibility and sixth form students make very good role models for younger pupils.
- The school makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' moral, social and cultural development.

## Commentary

18. The school enjoys an excellent reputation and pupils know when they join that the expectations placed upon them are high. There is a strong sense of school identity and, during discussions pupils of all ages say it is a privilege to be able to attend such a popular and highly regarded school.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.6	School data	0.1
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

19. Pupils like the school's friendly atmosphere and speak very highly of their teachers. Despite the difficulties they often encounter in their journeys to and from school, their attendance is well above average and they arrive ready, able and very willing to work. Time-keeping during the school day is good and this helps to ensure that pupils derive full benefit from the excellent teaching. Most of the pupils respond exceptionally well to the high level of intellectual stimulation and they make very rapid progress in their learning. They set themselves very high standards and work exceptionally hard. A few less motivated Year 9 pupils are occasionally restless in lessons. The school is aware of this problem and is taking the necessary steps to deal with it.

### ***Ethnic background of students***

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	665	7	0
White – Irish	10	0	0
White – any other White background	152	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	13	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	10	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	40	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	27	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	99	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	18	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Any other Asian background	107	1	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	15	1	0
Chinese	72	0	0
Any other ethnic group	23	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	92	0	0

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



20. There were few fixed-term exclusions in 2003/4 and no permanent exclusions. Pupils are mature and very responsible. Analysis of the pupils' questionnaires, however, showed that just over one-third know of incidents of bullying and a similar proportion feels that adults do not treat them fairly. During discussion, however, pupils of all ages felt that this did not reflect their experience of school life. They agreed that any instances of bullying were dealt with very effectively and inspectors agree with their very positive views.
21. There are many opportunities for pupils to assume responsibility and to take an active part in the day-to-day life of the school. They respond with great enthusiasm and house activities and extra-curricular activities are exceptionally popular. For example, inter-house sports and debating competitions help pupils to mature into confident young people and their enthusiasm makes a significant contribution to the school's lively and vibrant atmosphere.
22. Teachers and pupils are united by a sense of common purpose and their shared aspirations are very high. This shared commitment to education and high achievement is reflected in the school motto 'Qui patitur vincit' (Who endures wins). Pupils particularly appreciate the way that teachers give their time to help with any personal or academic problems. Relationships are based upon mutual respect and pupils recognise and appreciate the high level of personal freedom and trust granted, for example, during school trips. Pupils feel valued as individuals and working relationships are warm and mutually supportive. The school has a relaxed but very friendly and supportive atmosphere. This makes a major contribution to pupils' wholehearted commitment to their studies and the exceptionally high standards of work achieved.
23. The school's ethos is ideal for pupils' personal development in its special combination of traditional values and philosophy of respect for individual difference, and in not accepting prejudice of any kind. The school encourages respect and tolerance for other cultures and is characterised by racial harmony. Great importance is attached to educating the whole person, making very good provision for pupils' spiritual development and offering excellent moral, social and cultural education.
24. Latymer is a vibrant community. Pupils from diverse backgrounds reported that they felt accepted and they responded enthusiastically to the many opportunities for involvement in the life of the school. There is no daily act of collective worship but the weekly school and year assemblies promote corporate values extremely well through pupil participation. Religious education lessons give excellent opportunities for pupils to reflect on beliefs and values and moral issues are raised for discussion in most subjects. Spirituality is fostered particularly well in art and music and through such activities as the history trip to the battlefields of the First World War. The teachers and staff are exemplary role models for the school's values, listening to pupils' views, negotiating on matters of principle and holding them responsible for their actions. The strong support for the school's Amnesty and World Community societies indicates the highly principled attitudes of many pupils.
25. The long established house system plays a major role in social development through competitions in sport, music and drama and public-spirited fundraising for charities. Residential visits to the school's outdoor pursuits centre in Wales for all pupils in Years 7 and 9 develop teamwork extremely well. The wealth of extra-curricular activities, clubs and societies enrich pupils' social and cultural experience immeasurably and give them every opportunity to take on responsibilities. There is

very good representation of pupils' views through the school council and on Enfield Youth Assembly.

26. The school has an excellent reputation in music and drama and pupils achieve outstanding levels of performance in the many concerts and productions staged during the school year. Music offers a full range of ensembles from classical to jazz and is strong on music from other cultures, offering tuition in Asian instruments. Multicultural evenings celebrate the arts of different ethnic groups represented in the school. All pupils benefit culturally from the richness of cultural diversity in the school and by the many opportunities for foreign travel and exchanges with schools from other countries. The whole experience of pupils as they move through the school is one of broadening their outlook and developing their sense of responsibility towards others. It produces an excellent environment for pupils' personal development.

### **Sixth form**

27. Almost all Year 11 pupils stay on into the sixth form, where they continue to display excellent attitudes towards their work. Students' very good attendance, their strong work ethic and well-organised files of notes and work exemplify their focus and commitment. Students are keen to be fully involved and play a very active part in many aspects of the school. For example, many volunteer to act as peer supporters and mentors for younger pupils who are experiencing particular difficulty. They also serve as house captains, sports captains and organise many of the extra-curricular clubs. Students provide younger pupils with real friendship and support. They are impressive role models and excellent ambassadors for the school in the wider community.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is excellent. Teaching and learning are excellent and the curriculum is good.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 9 and excellent in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Assessment is satisfactory in the main school and very good in the sixth form.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is excellent in the sixth form.
- Teachers have an exceptionally high level of subject knowledge and use it well to extend pupils to achieve the highest levels and grades.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects and the variety of activities set in lessons are promoting an interest in learning.
- Pupils are encouraged to think problems and ideas through for themselves and this is improving the quality of learning and achievement at the top levels.
- National Curriculum levels are not used enough by teachers to inform lesson planning.

### Commentary

28. Parents and pupils think very highly of the teaching in the school and they are right to think that teachers are dedicated and very skilful. The improvement of teaching and learning has been, and remains, a key focus for the school and is contributing to the consistently high quality of teaching.
29. During the inspection, only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed and a very high proportion was very good or excellent. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is stronger than that in Years 7-9. In Years 10 and 11, 77 per cent of the teaching observed was very good or excellent. In Years 7-9, 65 per cent of lessons were judged to be very good or excellent; this was lower mainly because of less rigorous use of assessment data in lessons and use of National Curriculum levels.

#### **Main School - Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 139 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
29 (20.8%)	61 (43.8%)	39 (28%)	9 (6.5%)	1 (0.7%)	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.*

30. Probably the greatest strength of teaching is the challenge and inspiration provided by teachers. Teachers have a very high level of subject knowledge and they convey to pupil their enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers probe and challenge pupils and are able to push even the most able to even higher levels. Their enthusiasm for their subjects, partly reflected in the outstanding range of extra-curricular activities provided, contributes to the thirst for learning which characterises the school. The level of challenge and inspiration is a key factor in explaining the exceptional achievement at the higher levels.

31. Lessons are exceptionally well-managed by teachers; although teachers have high expectations of behaviour, lessons are generally relaxed with students initiating questions and ideas. A climate is established in lessons where pupils can explore their ideas and wrestle with difficult concepts. Teachers constantly encourage pupils to take risks and work things out for themselves. Parents were right in the parents' meeting when they said a strength of the school was that it taught pupils to think for themselves and was not a "crammer". The promotion of independence helps to explain why so many students achieve exceptionally well at A-Level.
32. The planning of lessons is very thorough and very good use has been made of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. In all year groups teachers are making very good use of the recommended three part structure. The starts and ends of lessons are generally very effective and conform to guidance. There is a fairly narrow band of ability in the school but even taking this into account there is scope to target different class work and homework on students in some lessons.
33. Pupils with special educational needs are very well taught in mainstream lessons. Because of the very clear guidance given by the special needs co-ordinator, teachers are aware of the individual needs of these pupils and provide sensitive and effective support where it is required. This usually takes the form of individualised intervention such as additional explanations and questions rather than specially tailored tasks, though some special work was seen in mathematics. Where learning support assistants are available they are well used. There are no students with English as an additional language who are at early stages of English language fluency and consequently there is no specialist teaching.
34. Teaching is excellent in music for pupils in Years 7 to 11. It is also excellent for pupils in Years 10 and 11 in modern foreign languages, art, religious education and history in Years 10 and 11. In all other subjects and stages teaching is very good, except for history, science and mathematics for Years 7 to 9 where it is good. Teaching is less strong in these subjects because pupils' assessments are not used enough to target work on individual or groups of pupils.
35. Assessment is good in Years 10 and 11 but there are inconsistencies in quality. Assessment is a strength in English, design and technology, art and design, modern foreign languages and information and communication technology. A particular strength of assessment is the rigour with which underachieving pupils are identified and provided with support. A system of target-setting has recently been introduced and all pupils have set their own targets, in liaison with their form tutors. Marking is generally very good but it is unsatisfactory in mathematics and inconsistent in geography. All teachers are provided with a range of assessment data on their classes at the start of the academic year. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have target grades set based on value-added data and the progress of individual pupils is monitored carefully to ensure that pupils remain on target. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are given grades for effort and achievement each term but these are not matched to National Curriculum levels by all departments. This is leading to some teachers in the science, history and mathematics departments not using assessments sufficiently to inform the planning of lessons and schemes of work. This is having an impact on standards achieved in these subjects.
36. Pupils' learning is excellent; it is very good in Years 7 to 9 and excellent in Years 10 and 11. Pupils take their studies very seriously and they are determined to do well. They work very hard and are extremely well-focused in lessons. It is rare for a pupil to

move off task. This high degree of concentration enables teachers to move at a very fast pace and for significant ground to be covered in each lesson. Pupils are prepared to take the initiative in lessons and are excellent at working independently. They feel sufficiently confident and secure to ask questions and explore ideas themselves in lessons. In small group and paired-work they cooperate very well.

37. There has been an excellent improvement in teaching since the previous inspection when it was good. The training of staff on planning has been effective in improving the quality of lesson plans and the structure and variety of lessons.

## Sixth form

38. Teaching is excellent in the sixth form and is a key factor in explaining the students' excellent achievement and their outstanding success in university applications. All lessons observed in the sixth form were at least good and a high proportion was very good or excellent. Students rightly see teaching as a strength of the school.

### **Sixth form - Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 67 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
15 (22.4%)	37 (55.2%)	15 (22.4%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)	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.*

39. The most notable strength of sixth form teaching is the high level of subject expertise of teachers and the way it used. Members of the teaching staff are exceptionally well-qualified, with significant numbers having higher degrees in their subjects, and the teachers are able to use their knowledge to extend even the most able students. Lessons are characterised by constant challenge, with teachers always probing and pushing the students to improve. This sometimes leads to some remarkable gains in lessons. For example in one Year 12 drama lesson where the teacher rigorously evaluated performances, nearly all of the points made were absorbed by the students and incorporated into subsequent work. The pace of learning in this lesson was outstanding.
40. Sixth form teaching has a number of other strengths. Although teachers have high expectations of their students and push them to do well, their enthusiasm for their subjects is conveyed to students. Many lessons are full of vitality, with students engrossed in their learning. This involvement in lessons is also achieved by the variety of tasks that teachers set and the opportunities provided for students to explore and talk through issues themselves. In many of the lessons observed teachers held back answers and made the pupils come to their own conclusions. This strategy of making the students think for themselves is very effective in deepening and consolidating learning.
41. Teaching is at least very good in all of the fourteen subjects inspected in detail. It is strongest in modern foreign languages, art and music where some inspirational lessons are taking place. There are no patterns of weakness in other subjects, except that the occasional lesson lacks variety.
42. Assessment in the sixth form is very good. Students' progress is monitored carefully and marking is very thorough and informative in all subjects except biology and chemistry where it could be more detailed. The ongoing assessment of work in lessons is excellent.
43. By the time students reach the sixth form they are excellent learners. They can absorb ideas quickly and they have very high powers of concentration. In pairs and groups they discuss ideas and concepts with a high level of sophistication. Their ability to analyse and evaluate and draw ideas together is apparent in many lessons. The excellent use made of ICT by students to present work, analyse data and access information is an important factor in their academic success.

## **The curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is good in Years 7 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. The opportunities for enrichment through a wide range of extra curricular activities are excellent and the quality of accommodation and resources are good overall; resources are very good, and accommodation for most subjects is appropriate, but there are no specialist teachers or a teaching base for citizenship.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good range of courses offered meets the needs and aspirations of pupils.
- Very good careers advice and guidance is provided for all pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The range number and quality of extra-curricular activities is outstanding.
- Statutory requirements for religious education for pupils in the sixth form and collective worship across the school are not met.
- The provision of four foreign languages is very good.

## **Commentary**

44. The school provides a good curriculum that meets the needs and interests of the pupils. Languages provision is a significant strength. All pupils study at least one modern foreign language in Year 7 and two languages in Years 8 and 9. Many pupils also study Russian and Latin in Years 8 and 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are given a wide choice of GCSE subjects which match their future educational requirements very well. Given the academic nature of the intake, the school has sensibly decided not to offer specifically vocational subjects. Courses such as media and business, however, have strong vocational links and PE and drama courses have major practical elements.
45. Statutory requirements for the curriculum are met for pupils aged 11 to 16. Some time allocations to subjects are light but these are not having a significant impact on pupils' achievement except in citizenship. The time allocated to physical education in Years 10 and 11, and art, music and drama in Years 7 to 9 is only just adequate to deliver the curriculum. The overall time allocated to personal and social education is low. The required programme for citizenship, though well-planned, has weaknesses in the delivery through main stream subjects.
46. A significant strength of the school, and central to the school's aim to improve learning, is the provision for the teaching of learning skills to pupils. Three year groups have had an initial introductory lesson taught in assembly time, followed by sessions in tutor groups. The planning of these sessions is very thorough and they are leading to pupils gaining insights into the best ways to study at home, to revise and to learn in lessons.
47. The use of career tests and follow up interviews gives Year 11 pupils very good advice on their subject choices in Year 12. They are also provided with very good opportunities to participate in work experience.
48. Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for by a range of strategies, built around the requirements of the new Code of Practice. These include one-to-one and small group tuition to help with literacy difficulties or anger management, as well as a homework club after school twice a week to give extra help

to pupils who may find it difficult to cope with set work on their own. The main thrust of the support is in mainstream subject classes where teachers use learning support plans very well as a basis for sensitive individualised support. Sixth form pupils are trained as mentors to support pupils in earlier year groups. Outside agencies such as the educational psychologist and the borough inclusion services are used regularly. The school has completed a disability access survey and drawn up an action plan.

49. The provision for extra curricular activities is outstanding. There is a very rich and varied menu of activities in which large numbers of pupils take part. Pupils say that music and physical education activities are so extensive that they have to attend these on alternate weeks to be able to do both. Art and design, information and communication technology and design and technology departments buzz with life at lunchtime and after school. Computers are available during school hours and the school network with stimulating materials for homework can be accessed from home. Matches are organized in physical education and theatre trips in modern languages, English and drama are frequent. In addition to this there are many other visits and exchanges to Europe and further afield, for example, trips to France, Germany, and Russia in modern languages, Austria in music and Barbados in physical education, where 30 matches were played on a tour last year. This work is warmly appreciated by pupils and does much to complement the high standards of work in the classroom.
50. The school is keen to develop the curriculum and has a working party to monitor curriculum issues and to improve provision where necessary. Several innovations have been implemented since the previous inspection. These include the reduction in the number of GCSEs taken by students and the better time allocation for art in Years 8 and 9.
51. The very good resources include many inter active white boards which make learning lively and visual. Members of staff are exceptionally well-qualified and they have the high level of subject expertise necessary to meet the needs of the highly academic pupils. Technical support is very good. The new accommodation for media, art and music is excellent. Citizenship has no subject base and no specialist teachers.

### **Sixth form**

52. The curriculum provides very well for students to progress from GCSE to AS and A Level courses in a very wide range of subjects. Advanced extension awards and a European accreditation in information and communication technology complement the A Level curriculum, as does the innovative addition of a critical thinking AS level course. Statutory requirements are not met in religious education.
53. One of the best assets of the very good resources is the highly qualified staff and their specialist expertise. Sociology, business and economics are taught in rooms which are too small for the size of the classes. This hinders learning. The library and learning resource centre provide very good facilities and a wide range of recent well catalogued resources for independent study.
54. There is an excellent range of stimulating enrichment and extra-curricular activities for students in the sixth form. Critical thinking courses, debating, philosophy and literary societies are very well attended. Sometimes students benefit from the professional experience of visiting speakers. The Youth Action Volunteers in Enfield arrange placements in the community so that students can benefit from working in primary schools and sheltered homes for old people. There are chess and bridge clubs.



Productions in drama have a positive impact on the A Level curriculum. In addition all activities in individual subjects are open to the sixth form students. Their involvement in these provides a level of expertise and experience influential to younger pupils for whom they are excellent role models. Students speak highly of the rich opportunities provided by the school.

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

Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are excellent. The school also provides excellent support, advice and guidance for academic and personal development and involves pupils exceptionally well in its work and development.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school looks after its pupils exceptionally well and members of staff work as a very good team in order to ensure that their needs are met in full.
- Pupils' academic progress is very closely tracked and teachers provide individuals with excellent advice on how to improve their work.
- Procedures for seeking pupils' views are exceptionally effective and the school acts upon their suggestions and concerns wherever possible.
- Pupils receive outstanding guidance when making option choices at the end of Year 11.
- Students receive excellent guidance about higher education and employment.

### **Commentary**

55. Pupils receive an exceptionally high level of care and this support helps them to commit themselves fully to their studies. Child protection and health and safety procedures are comprehensive and members of staff fully understand their individual roles and responsibilities. Close liaison with external agencies also ensures that pupils receive specialist help and support as and when the need arises. Pupils speak very highly of the welfare officer and her care and understanding make a significant contribution to pupils' day-to-day well-being.
56. Teachers generally mark pupils' work very carefully and this helps them to identify and advise upon any difficulties at an early stage. If, for example, a pupil is underachieving he or she may be referred to their head of year or the learning mentors. Pupils appreciate the time teachers put in on their behalf and working relationships are warm and very constructive. Teachers provide each individual with high quality advice and guidance and this meets pupils' needs exceptionally well. The school places considerable emphasis on the importance of individual learning styles and this awareness enables pupils to approach their work in the most effective way.
57. Reviews of pupils with statement of special educational need and those on the School Action Plus register are carried out according to requirements and all pupils with special educational needs are regularly reviewed other than at the statutory times. All pupils with special educational needs benefit from informed guidance as to how to improve their skills, and the department is always available to give support and guidance to any pupil who approaches them.
58. The school regularly seeks pupils' views and takes these into account whenever possible. Sixth form students run the School Council and they meet the headteacher

once a week in order to keep him up to date with pupils' views and suggestions. Pupils are very pleased with the positive way in which teachers listen to their views. For example, they were dissatisfied with the condition of the school toilets and most of these have now been refurbished.

59. Teachers keep pupils exceptionally well-informed about the courses available in Years 10 and 11. A well-qualified team of teachers and careers advisers meets individual pupils at least once in order to provide advice on the most appropriate options. The strength of their advice is reflected in the pupils' outstanding examination success and the very low dropout rates from the various courses.

### **Sixth form**

60. Tutors liaise closely with subject teachers to maintain an overview of each individual and to catch any problems early. Students receive outstanding academic and personal support and teachers circulate 'round robin' notes if they need to monitor any particular individuals. Detailed records are kept of individual progress and very good teamwork helps to ensure that students achieve at the highest level. This is reflected in their outstanding success in national examinations.
61. Strong links with the world of commerce help to ensure that students are exceptionally well informed about the options available at the end of Year 13. Representatives from fields such as the law, medicine, accountancy and economics come into school to tell the students about the various careers open to them. Students also attend an 'Understanding Industry Day' and learn about opportunities in the financial management, business and recruitment sectors. The school encourages students to attend appropriate taster courses which help to inform them about applications, career progression and gap year opportunities.

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

The school's links with parents and the community are very good. Links with other schools and colleges are excellent.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Extensive links with other schools and the wider community enrich the curriculum and strongly support pupils' personal development.
- Parents hold the school in very high regard and they encourage their children to do their very best.
- The quality of information provided for parents about day-to-day events, the curriculum and their children's progress is very good.
- Sixth form students are excellent ambassadors for the school and make an extensive contribution to the local community.
- Very strong links with colleges and universities help students to make informed choices about what they do after they leave at the end of Year 13.

### **Commentary**

62. Pupils gain substantially from the school's huge range of cultural, artistic and sporting connections within the local and wider community. The very extensive range of extra-curricular activities underpins many of these links and provides pupils with an

exceptionally broad variety of experience. Liaison with the primary schools from which pupils are drawn is very effective, even though these include over 100 schools from a very wide area of north London. Given this number, it is very difficult to establish close curriculum links but teachers make very good efforts to involve the schools in the many activities as much as possible. For example, pupils from one primary school participated in a recent musical production and subsequently used the media facilities to make a compact disc. In addition, there is an annual evening for Year 6 musicians and many of the older pupils return to their original primary schools to perform with their musical instruments. Extra-curricular activities enable pupils to make regular contact with other secondary schools. For example, school sport and debating teams regularly and successfully compete at local, regional and national level.

63. Parents are keen for their children to do well and their wholehearted support and encouragement is reflected in pupils' high aspirations and superb attitudes to learning. Activities organised by the school association are very well supported and the significant sums of money raised are used to provide additional learning resources. As part of the inspection process, parents completed a questionnaire that requested their views on numerous areas of school life. Analysis of their responses shows that there is very little about the school that they would like to change. This reflects the fact that this school has an excellent reputation and is heavily over-subscribed. Ten per cent of those who replied feel that the school does not do enough to take their views into account when planning for the future. Inspectors disagree with this view. Questionnaires are circulated at each consultation evening and, whenever possible, the school incorporates parents' views when planning for the future.
64. Parents and carers attend the formal reviews of pupils with special educational needs and are kept informed of the progress of these pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator conducts awareness-raising evenings for parents of Year 7 and Year 12 pupils with special educational needs.
65. Parents receive very clear information about their children's progress and their attendance at the annual consultation is excellent. The school's prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are very detailed and are supplemented each term by the 'Latymer Link' magazine. Parents also receive other correspondence as necessary and the school's internet website keeps them fully up to date with on-going school life.

## **Sixth form**

66. Sixth form students make a significant contribution to the local and wider community. For example, elected students take part in the Enfield Youth Assembly and help to make decisions that affect the lives of young people in Enfield. In addition, many volunteers support the activities of voluntary organisations such as 'Youth Action Volunteers' and 'Kith and Kids'. These activities contribute to students' personal development and help to ensure that people with physical difficulties receive the help they need.
67. The extensive extra-curricular programme helps students have regular contact with their counterparts at other schools. There are very well-established debating links and students are keen participants in a wide range of sporting and musical activities. In addition, there are annual exchange visits to Germany and Russia which help students to improve their language skills and learn more about life abroad.

68. A wide range of firms from the financial and business sectors contribute to the careers programme. Several students take part in the Medlink programme for those considering reading medicine at university. There are well-established links with a number of higher education institutions which make a very good contribution to future career development.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are very good overall. The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is excellent and management is very good. Governance is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership, with a clear vision and direction that permeates the work of the school.
- The focus on improving learning and using information and communication technology has led to excellent progress in these areas.
- The headteacher, governors and senior staff have created an excellent ethos where students and staff support each other and where learning is valued.
- The line management of heads of department and senior staff is well organised and rigorous.
- The classroom observation system is not sufficiently rigorous and is not providing an overview of the quality of teaching.

### **Commentary**

69. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is excellent. The headteacher has established, with governors, a clear, shared vision which the school has had great success in achieving. This vision rightly focuses on academic excellence and improving the quality of learning, but also shows a concern for a broad education and for individual pupils.
70. Parents see the breadth of the education provided for pupils, especially through the outstanding extra-curricular activities, as a major strength. The headteacher and senior staff, especially the heads of year, know pupils very well and value all pupils, whatever their academic ability. The headteacher is very visible about the school and models good behaviour by displaying an interest and concern for individual pupils. The head and senior staff have created a school with very high academic achievement but also a vibrant learning community where individuals are able to develop and are valued. This includes staff as well as pupils, as exemplified by the very good progress that has been made in implementing the workforce reform initiative which is designed to reduce teachers' workload.
71. As well as this broader vision, the school has two more specific key priorities: to improve learning and to make the best use of new technology for administration and learning. The strategic planning for these areas is excellent and significant progress has already been made in developing them. The training of staff in learning styles and the structure and planning of lessons has contributed to the very high quality of teaching in the school. The school's computer system is already making a major impact on management with areas such as admissions, assessment and options on the school's intranet and all staff having lap top computers.

72. Although strategic planning has strengths and is characterised by a drive to improve teaching and raise standards further, the school improvement plan and the department action plans have some weaknesses. Actions are specific and clear but some of the plans comprise more lists of things to do than improvement strategies targeted at areas of weakness.
73. Management is very effective in terms of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements there are weaknesses in some of the systems in place. Heads of department do not have a secure overview of standards in Years 7 to 9 and some of the evaluations produced by departments lack rigour. A classroom observation system is in place but the approach to classroom observation is inconsistent in departments and it is not being used sufficiently either to gain an overview of teaching quality or ensure that the excellent practice is more widely shared.
74. In recent years, the school has improved its approach to the professional development of staff. The varied training programme is driven by the needs of the school and subject departments, as identified in their respective improvement plans. New members of staff feel they are well supported by their departmental colleagues. Newly qualified teachers do not usually attend introductory programmes provided by the local education authority and therefore miss an important opportunity, especially if they plan to teach in other types of school in the future. The school's systems for performance management of teachers work well and attitudes towards the processes have become more positive. Most members of staff have specific, measurable targets and all work with a senior member of staff, assigned to monitor progress and evaluate their performance annually. In a minority of cases, the targets are neither specific, nor measurable and timescales are unclear, but practice is improving. The school is developing its procedures for monitoring staff development and performance management, but is not yet in a position to assess their impact because there is no formal process for evaluating the overall quality of teaching and learning.
75. The line management system, which was a weakness in the last inspection, is now a strength. The headteacher has established a rigorous system where he meets each department in the autumn term following their own self-evaluations. Each department is line-managed by a member of the senior management team who meets with the head of department twice a term and ensures that they are on track with their improvement plans.
76. The special educational needs co-ordinator manages the department very well ensuring that assessments and reviews are carried out in accordance with requirements and that all pupils are provided for according to their need. She has a strong belief that the future development of the department is central to the progress of all pupils. She provides very good leadership for other members of staff in their provision for pupils with special educational needs and enables the pupils in her care to achieve very well in the mainstream system.
77. Governance is good overall. A particular strength is the close contact between the chair of governors and the headteacher and the knowledge of the school that this regular contact is bringing the chair. Governors have a very good grasp of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainment and make good use of benchmarking data to judge how well departments are doing. They also have a clear grasp of the school's aims and key priorities and play an active part in the formulation of the school improvement plan. Regular, planned visits to departments by governors are providing them with very good first hand knowledge of the school. The governors' overview of

the quality of teaching is not sufficient and their monitoring of the implementation of the school improvement plan is not systematic enough. Some statutory requirements are not being met: religious education provision in the sixth form, a daily act of collective worship and the assessment and reporting on attainment in citizenship.

78. Financial management is very good. There are very efficient systems in place and spending is monitored carefully. Where there are possibilities of overspend by departments or budget areas, they are identified and reported to the headteacher, governors and relevant budget holders. The budget is very tight, with a small projected surplus for this financial year but there is very good strategic planning and the priorities in the school improvement plan have been costed, with money set aside for them. The school has a keen eye for value for money and considers options very carefully before major spending decisions. The expenditure per pupil is below that of other schools in the LEA and, taking into account the excellent achievement and teaching in the school, the school is providing excellent value for money.

**Financial information for the year 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,240,778	Balance from previous year	34,876
Total expenditure	5,129,446	Balance carried forward to the next	146,208
Expenditure per pupil	3,772		

**Sixth form**

79. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good and are contributing to the students' excellent achievement. A very good strategic plan has been prepared and it is being implemented on schedule. Excellent use is made of data to gain an overview of the performance of subjects and individual students. A great strength of management is the rigorous system for identifying students who are underachieving, or in difficulty, and the provision of follow up support. Currently, 13 students are receiving support from learning mentors. There is excellent support provided for students with their university entrance, particularly through individual guidance by a deputy headteacher and the two heads of year and the University Application Web site. This outstanding web site has detailed guidance on universities, courses and applications, including video clips of successful former students talking through their experiences. Heads of year do not receive copies of sixth form classroom observations made by heads of department. Although they have a good grasp of weaknesses in teaching, the lack of involvement in observations means they do not have a clear overview of the quality of sixth form teaching.

**WORK RELATED LEARNING**

80. The quality of provision to prepare pupils, in the main school, for the next stage of education or employment is satisfactory. A policy has been written and agreed by the Governing Body. Aspects of work related learning are delivered to Year 9 through a satisfactory personal, health and social education programme and to Year 10 through work shadowing, as part of the summer term citizenship week.
81. Some work related learning is delivered through a Years 10 and 11 careers programme taught in form time. Year 11 benefit from excellent career interviews and from 2005 all will experience work placements relevant to future job aspirations. The

careers room offers an excellent resource for pupils to research career pathways and to gain understanding of what the implications are for the subjects they choose in school. These career interviews, carried out by Connexions staff, are particularly successful in reinforcing the work done by the learning mentor in raising the aspirations of the few disaffected pupils. There is a mini-enterprise activity which all Year 10 pupils experience in "Citizenship Week".

82. The provision for work related learning has been audited by the co-ordinator across the subjects of the curriculum but not yet mapped or monitored to determine the effect on pupils' achievement. Mini enterprises, as part of the GCSE business course, are particularly successful ventures for giving pupils understanding of planning, marketing and sales techniques. Girls succeed well as managers, in these situations, although fewer girls than boys opt to take the business course. Given the strongly academic nature of the school's intake, the school has sensibly decided not to provide specifically vocational subjects but it provides a number of subjects with vocational elements.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4**

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Three modern foreign languages are taught at the school – French, German and Russian – and these are reported on in the modern foreign languages section. Latin is also taught and two lessons were sampled, one for Year 9 and one for Year 11. The teaching observed in these lessons was of a very high quality. The teachers had excellent subject knowledge and paid close attention to pupils' individual needs. Latin GCSE results last year were well above average, with 62 per cent of pupils gaining A\* or A grades.

#### **English**

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- Teachers are enthusiastic, well prepared and expert in their subject and this produces high quality learning and confident pupils.
- The department's increased use of assessment information and target setting has enabled more pupils to gain the highest examination grades at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- Effective and shared planning means that pupils of all abilities are now making very good progress during their first three years in the school.
- An exceptionally good range of extra-curricular activities encourages pupils to develop their strengths and their learning from one another.

#### **Commentary**

83. In the 2004 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment was well above the national average. Results were in the top 5 per cent of all schools and compared very favourably with those in other grammar schools. In 2004 all pupils gained at least a Level 6 in the tests and 89 per cent attained Level 7 or above. The percentage of pupils awarded a Level 7 or higher has almost doubled since 2001. For the first time in recent years pupils' performance at the higher levels in English within the school surpassed that in mathematics and science. There were no significant differences between the results obtained by boys and girls.
84. In the GCSE examination pupils also do extremely well when compared with those in other grammar schools. In English and in literature in 2004, with 100 per cent A to C grades, only 2 per cent and 4 per cent respectively of all pupils were graded below a B. 84 per cent achieved A and A\* grades in English and 80 per cent in literature. This represents very good progress in literature, where 60 per cent had gained the highest grades in 2003.
85. Work seen during the inspection reflects these very high standards. Achievement within Years 7 to 11 is very good. Pupils work hard in lessons and sustain their efforts extremely well so that, over time, both the quality and quantity of their work is impressive. They enter the school with well-developed skills in all areas of the subject



and many already have good knowledge about literature. This enables them to tackle enthusiastically some demanding schemes of work in Years 7 and 8 and to gain experience of texts like *Beowulf* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Their ability to make rapid progress in their study of Shakespeare is particularly noticeable. Pupils are very competent readers, able to read aloud expressively and to explore resourcefully in discussion a range of meanings below the surface. Most of the younger pupils read widely for pleasure and are articulate about their preferences. There is less waning of interest in reading by Year 9 in this school than is usual elsewhere. By Years 10 and 11 pupils are analytical and sophisticated readers. They are unusually skilled in showing their understanding of how writers create particular effects through choices of language and structure, and often relate this to their own writing.

86. Writing skills are similarly high. Pupils write fluently and with relatively wide vocabularies when they arrive in Year 7 and their written work throughout the school demonstrates how effectively they build on these early advantages, making conscious choices in crafting their writing and relishing opportunities to share it with one another. In GCSE coursework pupils successfully tackle some very challenging written tasks. They develop and illustrate ideas very competently and are quick to pick up on connections between one text and another.
87. It is unusual to find pupils below the sixth form whose skills in speaking and listening are as advanced as those found here. There is an exceptionally high level of involvement in class discussion. Pupils have lots to say and also listen courteously to one another and to their teachers. The strong debating tradition in the school both reflects and supports their confident and highly articulate talking, enabling pupils to use lesson time very economically. Younger pupils show maturity in their use of speech in formal contexts. In GCSE classes some complex ideas are impressively explored through sustained discussion, both in groups and as a class.
88. The overall standard of teaching is very good and some of the lessons observed during the inspection were excellent. Pupils achieve very well because they are successfully stimulated by energetic and fast-paced lessons. Some teachers use interactive whiteboards very successfully, although during the inspection there were no opportunities for pupils to use them. All the lessons seen were characterised by busy, purposeful activity and an excellent match between teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm and pupils' enjoyment of learning. Pupils are unusually confident in asking as well as answering questions, showing willingness to discovering connections across lessons and topics. Since the last inspection teachers have started to share their planning to good effect and to make regular use of learning objectives. In Years 7 to 9 pupils are clear about how to make progress because all teachers now use National Curriculum levels in marking and know their pupils thoroughly as individuals. Similarly, in marking the work of Years 10 and 11, teachers refer explicitly to assessment objectives from the examination syllabus and ensure that pupils understand how to use the grade criteria to improve their performance. Teachers devote a great deal of time to promoting enthusiasm for their subject, both in lessons and through their willing involvement in educational visits and activities outside lessons.
89. The department is a committed and hard working team and is well led with energy and enthusiasm. Monitoring is far more effective than at the time of the last inspection, resulting in greater consistency of good practice across the department and improved pupil achievement. Recent staff changes have been very well managed to ensure that

new staff settle quickly and confidently and that new and experienced teachers benefit from one another's skills and interests. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

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

90. Pupils' literacy and language skills are excellent and they are contributing to their high academic achievement in all subjects. Pupils enter the school at 11 with high levels of literacy and these are sustained and developed. They use their skills to good effect in all areas of the curriculum, engaging particularly confidently in class discussion and thus exploring ideas and concepts more thoroughly than is characteristic for most pupils of their age. In music, physical education and geography, pupils' wide vocabularies enable them to make rapid progress in class discussion. Pupils are appreciative of the many opportunities for extended discussion in religious education. They are also very good readers, both independent and critical, with good research skills. They make good use of a library which is impressively well-stocked with books, newspapers and magazines. Teachers in most subjects show good awareness of the ways in which they can help pupils achieve greater accuracy and extend their writing repertoires. The art teachers are particularly successful in providing materials to support pupils in developing a range of writing. All departments display key subject terms and pupils use these accurately both in discussion and in writing. In science, for example, teachers give very clear and concise answers to questions. Most pupils use language flexibly and with sophistication, both as a tool for thinking and as a means of demonstrating their learning.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Provision for modern foreign languages is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have risen and are very high.
- Lessons are highly challenging and pupils feel encouraged to work as hard as they can.
- The highly skilled team of teachers and support staff is innovative, enthusiastic and keen to share ideas with each other.
- The range of enrichment activities provides pupils with unparalleled opportunities to deepen their learning.

### **Commentary**

91. Standards assessed by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were very high, with the vast majority of pupils reaching Level 6 or better. More girls than boys reached the higher levels. Standards observed during the inspection show that all pupils are working at levels which greatly exceed nationally expected levels. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good, with pupils making very good progress in their first and second languages. Results in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 were very high compared with national averages in 2004. All candidates gained grade C or better, with the vast majority gaining grades A\* or A. Average points scores were also very high and boys' were similar to girls', demonstrating that boys did much better than boys nationally. Pupils entered for French and for German in 2004 obtained much better results in these subjects than they did in the average for all their other

subjects. National statistics for Russian are not published but nearly all pupils at the school gained a grade A\* to C. Standards seen during the inspection are also very high in French and German. There are no differences in achievement between girls and boys or pupils from ethnic minority or any other groups. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is excellent, with pupils working as hard as they can and moving swiftly forward.

92. Very good teaching in years 7 to 9 ensures that lessons are well paced, keeping pupils alert and focussed. Teachers often use new technology effectively to present new language. They communicate in the foreign language throughout most lessons and insist pupils do the same. Pupils' work is exceedingly well-organised. They keep careful notes of grammar and vocabulary and present projects such as personal albums beautifully and memorably. Teachers' excellent and deep knowledge of their subjects means they can pass on much valuable cultural information and they deploy a range of learning styles, including song and movement. Pupils have plentiful opportunities to write extensively and teachers mark their work thoroughly, accurately and frequently. Not all pupils have the opportunity in lessons to use new technology to support their language learning and teachers do not always start lessons with a clear objective. Resources are good overall, but a minority of classrooms are not well equipped. Teaching is excellent in Years 10 and 11. Pupils add to their grammatical framework, maintaining their impeccable organisational skills. Relations between teachers and pupils evolve, becoming yet more positive. Teachers have excellent information on each of their pupils' strengths and weaknesses and pupils have a very clear idea of what they need to do in order to obtain their targeted result.
93. The leadership and management of modern foreign languages are excellent. The department has a clear vision of its aims and mission, focussing on broadening horizons, challenging stereotypes and achieving excellence. The large numbers of teachers of all ages work as an excellent team, supporting each other and sharing ideas. The department's clear policies and procedures reflect their priorities, and there is a consistency in teaching methods and marking. The department organises a vast range of events, visits and individual support for pupils to provide a coherent and effective service. There has been excellent improvement since the last inspection because teaching and learning have improved and standards have risen.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are very high.
- Teachers have extremely good subject knowledge and there is some excellent teaching.
- In some classes the quality of feedback to pupils on their written work is unsatisfactory.
- The department is only just beginning to develop the use of information and communication technology.

### **Commentary**

94. Standards have improved well since the last inspection. It is difficult to continue improving when results are already very high and yet the improvement trend at this

school is similar to the national one. Pupils come into the school with very high standards. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, pupils' performance is very high. These very high levels of attainment continue into Years 10 and 11, with well over 80 per cent of pupils getting A\* or A in their GCSE. A very large number of pupils choose to continue with the subject in the sixth form.

95. Achievement is very good. The majority of pupils make very good progress from year to year and some make excellent progress, happily tackling extension tasks and work from higher levels. In the best lessons progress is visible as pupils develop ideas, conjecture, hypothesise, search for ways to prove or disprove and come to well thought out mathematical conclusions. A small number of pupils in Years 7 and 8 make only satisfactory progress and lose confidence in the mixed ability setting.
96. Teaching and learning are very good. There is some excellent teaching where the teachers' love and enthusiasm for the subject infects the pupils, pushing their thinking to its limits and enabling them to recognise and make connections between different mathematical ideas. The majority of lessons are good or very good. They are carefully planned with clear objectives, effective explanations and skilful questioning to keep every pupil involved and to check they have understood. Relationships are positive, expectations are high and no-one misbehaves. In most lessons pupils are allowed to work collaboratively if they wish and some pairs take good advantage of this by sharing and discussing ideas. Those teachers who are confident with mathematical software are able to use it to sharpen teaching and improve learning in certain parts of the mathematics curriculum. For example, the new geometry package gives pupils visual confirmation of their ideas before they go on to find a geometric proof. The highest ability pupils are usually well catered for with suitable extension material but in some lessons those who find the ideas difficult are not given any extra support and continue to struggle.
97. Feedback on written work is unsatisfactory. Some exercise books are corrected regularly and contain teacher comments to help pupils assess their own progress and improve. Many books have no comments from the teacher and some also have large amounts of uncorrected work.
98. Leadership is good. The new head of department has analysed its strengths and weaknesses and is beginning to develop a strategic plan. She has already started a programme of classroom observation and is encouraging the use of interactive whiteboards. The new co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils is providing extra materials to extend their thinking in lessons. The most able pupils from several year groups also take part in the United Kingdom Mathematics Challenge. Management is satisfactory. The department meets regularly but is unable to cover all it needs to in the time available. Pupils are assessed regularly but the information available about their progress is not always reliable as the criteria for awarding grades are not used consistently by all staff. It is left up to individual teachers to deal with pupils who are not making the expected progress and therefore losing confidence. The department does not monitor this intervention and so a few of the Year 7 and 8 pupils identified last term are still making little headway.
99. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards have risen and there is a larger proportion of teaching which is very good or excellent. Some of the negative features mentioned in the last inspection are still present in a small proportion of lessons. Gifted and talented pupils have more extension materials in lessons. The use of information and communication as a teaching resource has not

improved until recently but with the purchase of interactive whiteboards and new software the department is now making some progress in this area.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

100. Pupils' ability to apply their skills in other subjects is excellent. They handle complex statistical methods in geography, apply formulae confidently in science and are able to measure accurately and to use scale and proportion in their practical subjects. There has been no discussion between mathematics and other departments, except for the science department, to consider extending the understanding of mathematics in applied situations or to ensure that what is taught is consistent.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

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

- Very good teaching is contributing to very high standards, especially in the GCSE examinations.
- Very good, and often excellent, attitudes, behaviour and levels of self-motivation of the pupils are contributing to the high levels of attainment.
- Inconsistent marking and limited use of data for tracking achievement means that opportunities to support pupils' learning are missed.
- Pupils are confident in handling apparatus and they carry out high quality scientific investigations.

#### **Commentary**

101. Standards in science, compared with national averages, are very high at the end of Year 9 and in the GCSE examinations. When compared to similar schools, they are well above average at the end of Year 9 and very high at the end of Year 11. These pupils entered the school with above average standards in science and their achievement at the end of Year 9 was good in relation to the standards that would be expected. In 2004 all pupils obtained a GCSE grade in the A\* to C range with 80 per cent gaining the highest A\* or A grades. The pupils have maintained and improved on the high results at the end of Year 9 and so achievement is very good. There is no significant difference in the achievement of girls and boys or any other group of pupils. These results are better than those at the time of the last inspection. Standards observed during the inspection were also very high by Years 9 and 11 and achievement good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 to 11. A particular strength is the practical skills of the pupils. They work safely, with confidence and are able to discuss their investigations in a mature manner.

102. Very good teaching and learning are contributing to the rise in standards especially at GCSE. Teaching and learning are very good overall but slightly weaker in Years 7 to 9 due to more inconsistent marking – an issue raised in the last inspection. The use of constructive comments that focus on how the work can be improved are used by some staff, but not all and opportunities to set different work geared to particular pupil needs are missed.

103. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, an improvement since the last inspection. The better aspects of teaching that stimulate very good learning include an interesting variety of activities; these maintain the pupils' interest and reinforce work covered previously. The very good subject knowledge of staff is used to challenge pupils and make the lessons lively. The best lessons stimulate scientific thinking and have very good pace and challenge. Pupils' enthusiasm and self-motivation, combined with their good relationship with the teachers, generates a productive atmosphere that contributes to pupils' very good progress in lessons. Good emphasis is given to the appropriate use of technical language, Pupils are encouraged to use their numeracy skills and an increasing use is being made of new technology, data-logging and sensing equipment to support teaching and learning. Homework is used effectively to support the work done in lessons.
104. Leadership and management of science are very good. There is a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and a clear vision for further improvement. The staff work well together and are good role models for the pupils. New procedures to track and monitor the progress of pupils are being introduced but these do not yet give sufficient data for staff to monitor achievement in a valid comparative manner. Since the last inspection standards have risen, teaching has improved, there is a greater use of information and communication technology and the uptake at A Level has risen but marking is still inconsistent. This represents very good improvement.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision for information and communication technology is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is very good throughout the school.
- The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is excellent.
- The management of and planning for whole school information and communication technology use is excellent.
- Teaching in timetabled information and communication technology lessons is very good and some excellent teaching was seen.
- Assessment procedures are very thorough and used to inform planning.
- The nature of the carousel arrangements for discrete information and communication technology skills lessons in Year 9 do not help to promote progression in learning.

### **Commentary**

105. In Years 7 to 9, standards seen in lessons and samples of students' work were very good. Achievement is very good as students become more familiar with a range of applications and have very good opportunities to use new technology in a wide range of contexts. By the end of Year 11 standards and achievement are very good.
106. These very high standards are achieved because of very good teaching and learning in exceptionally well-planned lessons. All students have a series of discrete information and communication technology lessons which are very successful in improving skills in core applications. For example, word-processing skills are very good, enabling students to demonstrate their high levels of literacy to very good effect

in all subjects. In Year 7, students are introduced to sophisticated graphics software, which allows them to use advanced image manipulation to raise their standards in relevant subjects. In Years 8 and 9 additional skills in computer control are developed through very good teaching and learning in the information and communication technology skills carousel. However, because of the time which elapses between carousel experiences in Year 9, some of the momentum in developing skills and knowledge can be lost. Further applications are developed through a programme of skills enhancement for all students in Year 10, where achievement is very good and often excellent. Teaching and learning in these sessions is very good and sometimes excellent.

107. The leadership and management are excellent. The director of information and communication technology works very closely with colleagues in subject areas. The curriculum is audited in detail to identify opportunities and departments are very well supported in acquiring appropriate hardware and software to meet subject requirements. Improvement since the last inspection is excellent.

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

108. The information and communication technology lessons make a significant contribution to the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. Very good teaching in the subjects of curriculum uses ICT to enhance subject knowledge and competence, for example in all aspects of design and technology. By the end of Year 9 students, have covered all National Curriculum requirements because of the skilful planning of the curriculum and the collaboration of, and very good teaching through, the use of new technology in subject departments. Information and communication technology is used to capitalise upon pupils' very good use of number when monitoring events and measuring change in practical science work.
109. The cross-curricular approach to learning through the use of new technology is also continued very successfully in Years 10 and 11. This ensures that very good standards are maintained in exploiting the use of information and communication technology as work becomes more challenging in examination courses across the subjects of the curriculum. Students in many subjects are able to use information and communication technology successfully to analyse data using sophisticated spreadsheets and in many subjects, the use of presentation software by teachers and students in whole class sessions is excellent.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is very good with excellent subject knowledge and relevant, challenging lessons resulting in very good learning.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to use new technology in lessons and teachers use information and communication technology to present material in stimulating ways, which motivates pupils and enhances learning.

- Fieldwork is organised for Years 7 and 8 but not for Year 9, resulting in too few opportunities for learning outside of the classroom.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent and there are not enough comments in books which identify how pupils can improve their work.

### **Commentary**

110. Standards by Year 9 are very high with a significantly higher percentage of pupils attaining Level 7 or above than nationally in 2004. Overall, achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good although there is not enough setting of different work for the relatively weaker pupils. Very high standards are maintained at GCSE with almost three quarters of pupils attaining a grade A\* or A in examinations. Overall, achievement is very good for all groups of pupils. GCSE coursework, which investigates socio-economic variations and environmental quality in the local area, is a strength: pupils respond to the opportunity to develop their own ideas within a supportive structure, resulting in excellent achievement. Pupils do not achieve as well in the agriculture unit because teaching styles are more limited hence limiting the quality of learning.
111. The overall quality of teaching is very good; in the lessons observed it was never less than good and sometimes excellent. Teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge, relevance, a demanding pace and intellectual challenge, which results in very good learning. For example, in a Year 9 lesson globalisation was related to items the pupils were wearing, and the use of video material and provocative questions challenged pupils' points of view. Ideas from the National Strategy for Years 7 to 9, such as starters and plenary sessions, have been incorporated into teaching with a positive impact on learning, such as in a Year 11 class pupils prioritised reasons for the scale of the recent tsunami disaster at the start of the lesson, revising their opinion at the end in the light of what they had learnt. Fieldwork exercises are organised for Year 7 (microclimate survey) and Year 8 (river study) but there is no provision for Year 9. The department has begun to involve pupils in evaluating their own work but achievement is not as good as it could be because comments in some books are not sufficiently indicating how improvements can be made.
112. Very good use is made of the computer suite; for example, Year 7 pupils were able to consolidate their understanding of settlement by working through structured revision questions, presented in a template stored on the network. Information and communication technology is embedded in general classroom practice through the appropriate use of interactive white boards. A good contribution is made to literacy and numeracy. Pupils are given opportunities to write in a range of styles, such as a postcard from the Italian Alps in Year 8, or questionnaire design in Year 10. Specialist vocabulary is displayed in classrooms, with attention paid to common spelling errors. Opportunities to analyse and present data are taken across the age range; for example, the use of Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient, a high level skill, in Year 10 coursework.
113. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department based largely on informal monitoring and the analysis of examination results. Formal lesson observation and work analysis is not systematic enough to ensure consistency and to enable the sharing of best practice. Progress since the last inspection has been good although learning outcomes still need to be expressed more formally in unit plans.

### **History**



Provision in history is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils make outstanding progress in GCSE history.
- Relationships are excellent in all classes and pupils are very enthusiastic learners.
- Teaching is highly effective in developing informed citizens able to critically evaluate sources of information.
- Pupils develop deep insights into current issues in Britain, and the wider world.
- Pupils make insufficient progress in Years 8 and 9 where work does not have sufficient challenge.

### **Commentary**

115. Standards are well above average. In 2004 GCSE results were very high compared with national averages with 74 per cent of pupils obtaining A\* grades. Standards of work seen were very high for GCSE and above average for the end of Year 9.
116. Achievement is excellent by the end of Year 11 and very good by the end of Year 9. GCSE pupils do better in history than in the average of their other results and there is a marked improvement in the quality of their responses in Year 10. Pupils demonstrate sustained excellence in writing on Haig, Lenin, the Hungarian uprising and the changing course of the Cold War. However, there is less challenge in topics taught in Year 8 and 9 so that the higher attaining pupils do not achieve as much as they could. There are no differences in the achievement of boys and girls, and pupils with special educational needs achieved as well as others.
117. Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is highly effective in developing pupils as informed citizens who can critically evaluate sources of information, and develop deep insights into current issues in Britain, and the wider world. GCSE teaching is very good because teachers know exactly what to teach and how to get pupils to improve orally and in their written work. Pupils are very knowledgeable, enthusiastic and good collaborative learners. In work on Jack the Ripper, they understood the criteria for high level answers, discussed the sources thoroughly and expertly re-drafted their writing on computers. Good teaching in Years 8 and 9 was thought-provoking with video and poetry about the Holocaust and good oral work on the causes of the French Revolution. Teaching is not closely referenced to National Curriculum level descriptions so that pupils are not given effective assessment guidance on how to improve during a unit of work.
118. Leadership and management are very good. Leadership and management of the GCSE course are excellent with everything is in place to secure the highest standards. Good progress has been made in reviewing long term planning in National Curriculum history to produce breadth and balance through the teaching of non-European study units. However, in Years 7 to 9 medium term planning does not direct teaching to meet the higher levels of attainment and independent historical enquiry, the skill of interpretation, and the incorporation of local history are underdeveloped. The monitoring of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9, to develop and share good practice, lacks rigour.

119. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have improved in GCSE to above the school average. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 has been reviewed and there is now a more inclusive curriculum which meets the aims of the National Curriculum.

## **Religious education**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are high by Year 9 and very high on the GCSE course.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall, giving opportunity for pupils to learn through a range of activities that challenge their thinking.
- Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are very positive, and they enjoy the many opportunities to discuss values and beliefs.
- Leadership is highly effective in developing and utilising the creative talents and experience within the teaching team.
- Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 have only one lesson a fortnight, which limits what they are able to achieve.

### **Commentary**

120. Standards in religious education are high in Year 9, reflecting very good achievement in the subject. Pupils' essays discussing philosophical arguments for the existence of God show a level of understanding that is already approaching what is required for a grade C at GCSE. Teachers introduce pupils to elements of philosophy from Year 8, providing the intellectual challenge for producing work that is well above average. Pupils articulate and justify their own beliefs and values intelligently. The most capable distinguish themselves by their critical evaluation of philosophical and religious ideas. Pupils acquire very good knowledge of five major faiths through systematic study over Years 7 to 9. In lessons, pupils were perceptive in their ability to apply religious ideas to their own experience of life and compare religious with secular, moral values.

121. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils follow a non-examination course based on discussion of social and moral issues. Standards are above average and their achievement is good, although limited by the fact that a significant number of pupils only have only one lesson a fortnight. Teachers make full use of the available time, stimulating discussion through film, newspaper articles and role play and focusing it skilfully around prepared agendas. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic about the lessons, participate fully and achieve a very good level of understanding in them. Standards would be higher if all pupils had enough time to explore relevant religious teaching and consolidate their learning through written work. Pupils are assessed on their oral contribution to discussion but the absence of formal assessment means it is a less precise measure of attainment.

122. The school has entered between 35 and 40 pupils for GCSE in religious education in the last two years and the results have been outstanding, with all pupils achieving A\*/A grades. In 2004, three quarters of the candidates gained A\*, performing better in religious education than in the average of all their other subjects. Standards in the current Year 11 are also very high and achievement is excellent. The depth of

discussion in written work shows pupils are engaging with the subject, developing very good examination technique and evaluating issues intelligently, taking account of relevant Christian and Hindu teachings.

123. The quality of teaching is very good overall, ranging from good in Years 7 to 9 to excellent on the GCSE course. Lessons are well planned and pitched at the right level to challenge academic pupils. Highly effective use of interactive white boards has revolutionised teachers' presentation of lesson material and its impact on pupils' learning. More class use of new technology is gradually being introduced. Stimulating discussion in pairs and small groups, as well as many opportunities for individual reflection on the relevance of religious ideas for their own lives, are making a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Teachers employ a wide range of learning styles that actively engage the pupils in lessons and maximise learning. They establish very good relationships with pupils, managing their work effectively and creating a purposeful atmosphere for learning. In Years 7 to 9 major assessments receive detailed feedback on pupils' strengths and how they can improve. Day-to-day marking and assessment are less consistent, mainly because the criteria for assessing pupils' work and their level of attainment tend to be general, rather than subject specific.
124. Leadership and management of the subject are very good, promoting teamwork that releases the creative ideas of individuals and encourages all to try new approaches to teaching and learning by sharing their expertise. Curriculum development is particularly good, continuously revising teaching modules to include new approaches and developing cross-curricular links with art and history. The organisation of the department is highly efficient with respect to policies and resources, the only shortage being in the supply of artefacts. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Teaching has continued to improve, taking on board initiatives from the national strategy for Key Stage 3 and utilising new technology. Pupils are now doing better on the non-examination course in Years 10 and 11 and the GCSE results have improved to an outstanding level in the past two years.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are excellent because lessons are well planned and pupils respond very well.
- Excellent formative feedback given by teachers in lessons and in design folders enables pupils to make very good progress.
- Standards of design work are excellent because pupils receive very good guidance.
- Pupils make very good gains in their understanding of materials and construction processes because they learn what they are taught.
- Pupils make excellent use of new technology in Years 10 and 11 because they use skills and knowledge learnt in Years 7 to 9.

### **Commentary**

125. Standards attained at the end of Year 9 are well above national averages. In 2004, 95 per cent of pupils gained Level 6 or above. The standards of designing and making in

product design and textiles are very high. Pupils' knowledge and making in food technology is high but there is insufficient design work in the food studies courses for pupils to achieve very high standards. The use of information and communication technology is very high in product design but needs to be improved in textiles and food.

126. Standards at the end of Year 11 are very high compared with national averages. In 2004, 75 per cent of pupils gained A\* or A grades. Standards of work in design folders are very high, with most pupils using information and communication technology to produce work of an exceptional standard. The quality of making is very high, with many pupils using Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) manufacturing processes in product design GCSE very well. The standard of making in textiles is also very good.
127. Most pupils start in the school with very limited experience of design and technology. Most are at National Curriculum Level 4. By the end of the year most have a very good understanding of the design process and use new technology well in their research of products. They have a basic understanding of a range of materials and are beginning to make gains in developing ideas. In Year 8 their significant gains are made in pupils' knowledge and understanding of software drawing packages and the use of CNC equipment in product design. Pupils make good gains in the making skills in food and textiles. In Year 9 pupils use of information and communication technology develops further as they are able to use control packages effectively and other drawing packages. Overall achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good.
128. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is excellent in both textiles and product design. Pupils make very good progress in their design folders. Their knowledge and understanding of manufacturing processes improves and develops well over the key stage particularly in Year 11. Most pupils reach GCSE A\* grades in their design folders by the end of the course.
129. The quality of teaching and learning in both key stages is very good. Pupils apply themselves very well and learn well. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of design technology is excellent and they use this well in guiding pupils in lessons. Oral feedback to pupils in lessons and written comments in design folders are excellent. These enable pupils of all abilities to understand what they need to do to improve and learn. Teachers plan challenging projects and expect a high level of response from pupils. Homework is used well to extend pupils research and development of ideas. Literacy and numeracy are developed well in the department. There is good use of word banks in each room to develop good technical language and good use is made of their mathematical skills in calculations and the display of information using block graphs and pie charts. Teachers assess work very thoroughly and log progress on the schools' assessment system. A more accurate log of progress could be made if the assessments were in National Curriculum levels not just GCSE grades.
130. Leadership and management in the department are excellent. There is a clear sense of vision. Strategic planning and analysis of data is very good. The head of department is an excellent motivator and provides a good role model for both pupils and teachers. There is a very good team of teachers in the department. Curriculum plans are usually excellent, as is the formative assessment system in the department. There is good innovation particularly in the development of the use of information and communication technology in the department. Learning would improve if this were

extended more into food and textiles. The extension of teachers' lesson observations would further grow the quality of project work and pupils learning in Years 7 to 9.

131. Since the last inspection the department has made very good improvement. The numbers of pupils achieving the highest grades at GCSE have risen. There is higher and more consistent achievement in projects in Years 7 to 9. The use of information and communication technology has grown in project work in Years 7 to 9 and is used well in Years 10 and 11. Assessment is now excellent in the department and is leading to higher standards of work.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

132. Drama and media studies were not inspected in detail but they were sampled during the inspection and interviews were held with the teachers responsible for these areas.
133. **Drama** is taught separately, although the head of department's contribution to English teaching makes a useful bridge between the two areas. Teaching and learning are very good overall and some excellent work was observed in a GCSE class. Pupils' self-evaluation is particularly well used in lessons. Achievement by the end of Year 9 is good but the current time-tabling of the subject within a carousel is unhelpful. Although there are many opportunities for pupils to maintain continuity through extra-curricular drama, the time allowed for drama lessons is a limiting factor when they are considering GCSE options. The department is extremely well led and managed, resources and accommodation are impressive and collaboration between the drama teachers very effective. Drama contributes significantly to pupils' personal development and to provision for the arts within school.
134. **Media studies** is a popular and very successful GCSE subject. Pupils gain an inspiring grounding in the subject which encourages considerable numbers to go on to choose it as an A Level. The department is extremely well run and enjoys outstanding facilities. Teaching is very high quality and pupils respond with commitment and enthusiasm to high expectations. Analytical and practical skills, teamwork and self and peer evaluation were well developed in a Year 10 lesson.

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Year 11 pupils achieve very high standards as a result of receiving the highest quality of teaching.
- Independent learning leads to excellent achievement in the GCSE examination.
- Assessment is used very well by teachers for planning and by pupils for learning.
- Insufficient curriculum time is provided for Years 8 and 9 and this adversely affects pupils' progress.

### **Commentary**

135. The overall standard of work, on entry to the school, is well above average in knowledge and understanding and skill development in drawing. By the end of Year 9 attainment is well above average. As a result of the inadequate time provision in

Years 8 and 9, it is higher in knowledge and understanding, painting and drawing than craft skills. Teacher assessments confirm these well above average standards.

136. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard is very high. Pupils understand the quality they are aiming for in their work. In Year 10 they learn how to work creatively in a highly supportive studio environment. By Year 11 they have an ownership of the choices they make. Through research and experimentation they make excellent links with the works of other artists. They also meet all the other examination objectives. GCSE results are significantly above average; in 2004, this applied to boys and girls. Results have been consistently very high over the past few years.
137. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 is very good overall and occasionally excellent. Pupils benefit from visual presentations using computer images and the active learning strategies developed by their teachers. As a result, Year 7 understands why expressionist artists use one-point perspective in their painting and also deliberately break the rules. In turn they feel comfortable with making similar choices in their own work. Year 8 pupils are proud to read aloud their poetry, based on nightmares. They willingly take their turn in acting as 'peer teachers' to other pupils who need guidance in developing thumbnail narrative drawings. The self-esteem of one boy was raised considerably by undertaking this role. He admitted to not feeling so confident when writing poetry but knew that he had something to offer others as a draftsman. Year 9 boys enjoy the Pop art project and achieve as well as girls. They all attend carefully to details, when painting, and work hard to achieve the slick modern graphics displayed on drinks' cans, sauce bottles and crisp packets. All pupils achieve very well in the lessons because their individual needs are considered and tasks are appropriately challenging and open-ended.
138. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is excellent. By Year 11, they have a very clear understanding of the choices made and the reasons for making them. In the lessons seen and the sketchbooks studied pupils excelled in their research using books and the Internet. The resulting written work was of an exceptionally wide range and very good quality. The highest achieving pupils draw extremely well and imaginatively experiment using a range of media. All pupils understand the assessment objectives by which their work is to be judged. As a result of the opportunities provided for reflection and discussion they are able to set relevant sharply focused targets for improvement. In one lesson based on studying and responding to pasta, all pupils displayed excellent control over the materials used, clear understanding of links to other artists and many were able to develop strong personal responses to the challenges offered. Girls are able to maintain sustained concentration when not engaged actively in a lesson, boys have shorter concentration spans except when actively involved.
139. Teaching and learning are excellent. The strengths in teaching lie in the excellent command of the subject, the full range of active learning strategies used and the inclusion of all pupils. The strengths in learning stem from knowing the quality aimed for, learning by teaching others and enjoying learning in an ethos where new ideas, however tentative, are taken seriously. Independent learning is encouraged from Year 7 but developed very actively from Year 10.
140. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. An exceptionally clear vision, sense of purpose and very high aspirations are evident in documentation, room displays and work in progress. The leader, alongside others in the department has received teaching awards. He is an exceptionally good role model in the classroom.

He is aware of current initiatives and he maintains active links with the London art scene. The work of the department is further enriched by his colleagues' strengths as practising artists. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good, for all aspects under the direct control of the subject leader. Problems with time allocation still remain in spite of having been raised at the two previous inspections.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average in Year 9 and very high in Year 11.
- Achievement is excellent through the school as a result of excellent teaching and learning, excellent attitudes and extensive and high quality extra-curricular activities.
- Leadership is inspirational, creating an ethos in which pupils and teachers thrive.
- Assessment and analysis of results in Years 7 to 9 is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

141. Standards in Year 9 are well above average and are very high for a substantial number of these pupils. Performing and composing skills are well-established. The standard of composition when composing a short sound-bite to suggest an emotion is sophisticated and imaginative. Pupils use their advanced instrumental skills for this. When discussing the music they use correct vocabulary confidently, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding. By the end of Year 9, their achievement is excellent.
142. Standards in Year 11 are very high. All pupils play instruments competently, some to a very high standard. When playing classroom xylophones and glockenspiels they achieve a polished and controlled performance of Gamelan music very quickly. Their knowledge of music is extensive and they talk about it animatedly, using appropriate musical vocabulary. The profile of the groups is changing, with more boys now taking the course. The use of excellent information and communication technology facilities to create music is undoubtedly a factor in this change. Pupils continue their excellent achievement and this is reflected in examination results. In 2004, all pupils taking the examination in a larger than average group, achieved a grade between A\* and C. Results were very high when compared to the national figures.
143. Pupils are highly motivated to learn because they love music and because teaching and learning are excellent overall. Pupils' attitudes to music are excellent. The school's well-established reputation for music and its excellent facilities attract pupils to study the subject. Interesting and challenging topics and inspirational and enjoyable teaching mean that pupils spend their time in lessons working hard and productively, almost without realising it. Lessons are expertly planned and all objectives for learning are achieved by the ends of lessons. Pupils learn in different ways and are particularly good at working in small groups to compose and play music. Pupils work is assessed regularly and thoroughly, especially in Years 10 and 11. As a result pupils know their strengths and weaknesses and how to improve, thanks to very good individually focused advice from the teachers. In Years 7 to 9, although pupils review their learning they do not reflect on the quality of what they have achieved.

144. Standards in all aspects of the department have been maintained and improved since the last inspection. This is excellent. The leadership of the department is excellent. Other teachers and pupils regard this as inspirational. The very strong team, including nearly 30 instrumental teachers, work together to create an ethos which is of the highest quality. The management of the department is very good in that its strengths and weaknesses are well known through increasingly rigorous self evaluation. GCSE results are analysed thoroughly, but this does not yet happen sufficiently in Years 7 to 9 to plan in detail. The standard of bands, ensembles, choirs and orchestras is quite exceptional, providing rich and stimulating opportunities for pupils' personal development.

## **Physical Education**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are above average standards in all years and very high standards at GCSE.
- Very good teaching leads to very effective learning.
- The excellent range of extra curricular activities involves large numbers of pupils.
- Very positive attitudes and excellent relationships between staff and pupils enhance learning.
- Low time allocation in Years 10 and 11 hinders pupils' progress.

### **Commentary**

145. Pupils' standards of attainment on entry to the school in Year 7, are mostly at the expected level. By the end of Year 9, pupils attain above average standards in most activities. Their achievement is very good because they are very keen to improve their skills and they respond enthusiastically to fitness and evaluative tasks. Boys in Year 8, have skill and stamina when playing football. Girls in Year 9 have quickly adapted to the new skills and tactics involved in basketball. The low time allocated and the inconsistent spacing of core lessons limits the progress of pupils in Years 10 and 11. However, pupils' enthusiasm helps them to achieve well and maintain above average standards.

146. GCSE results have been consistently very high, with the majority of pupils gaining A\* and A grades in previous years. Present pupils following GCSE courses produce very high quality written work and have very competent practical expertise. Their standards are very high and their achievement is very good. Their personal exercise portfolios are of the highest standard and show excellent use of information and communication technology and analytical skills. As part of the extensive extra-curricular programme, many individuals and teams achieve very high standards in county and regional competitions. These talented pupils benefit greatly from the excellent opportunities provided by their teachers. Boys and girls have many opportunities to travel in this country and abroad to play fixtures and tournaments.

147. The overall very good achievement of pupils is directly attributable to consistently very good teaching and learning. Pupils' learning is enhanced because most year groups are divided by gender and the boys by ability. Teachers also provide extension tasks within these groups. These positive strategies promote the learning of all pupils. Planning is based on comprehensive units of work. Teachers have high expectations



and provide very challenging, progressive tasks which improve pupils' practical skills. Tasks which help pupils develop their evaluative skills are not taught as frequently. Teachers' subject expertise is very good and allows them to provide high quality demonstrations on which students model their skills. However, this visual stimulus is not consistently used in all lessons. The assessment system in Years 7 to 9 is linked well to the units of work but not to National Curriculum levels and pupils are unsure of how they can improve their level of work in each activity.

148. The head of department provides clear direction, excellent leadership and very good management for the subject. He monitors teaching regularly and leads by his own very good example. Use is made of data in evaluating the work of the department but there is scope to develop this further, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Community links with pupils, schools and clubs in this country and abroad are extensive. Very good improvements have been made since the previous inspection. These include: students' standards in performance, the quality of teaching, provision for extra curricular activities and the quality of leadership and management.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

149. GCSE results in **business studies** in 2004 continued to improve with almost all candidates achieving A\* and at least grade A. Work seen in business studies GCSE indicated that standards are excellent, particularly in relation to coursework where excellent use is made of information and communication technology. These standards reflect excellent teaching, learning and achievement.

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

150. Due to the constraints of the timetable, it was not possible to observe more than a minimum number of lessons in either citizenship or personal, social and health education. Therefore both these subject have only been sampled.
151. Provision for **personal, social and health education** is very good overall. The course is delivered through dedicated lessons in Years 7 to 9 and through linked assemblies and tutor periods in Years 10 and 11. These lessons cover topics such as health, smoking, fist aid, relationships, sex, drugs, study skills; they also allow for discussion of other topical issues that might arise. Extended residential expeditions to the school's field study centre at Cwm in North Wales for Years 7 and 9, contribute an enormous amount to pupils' personal and social development by providing challenges in the outdoors, and also in the skills of living together in study groups. Year 10 pupils have a "curriculum week" off timetable in which they study various topics related to personal and social education and to citizenship. This provision is closely linked to the citizenship curriculum, which is partially taught in the same lesson slots where topics overlap (see separate section below).
152. As no past or current students' work was available for scrutiny it is not possible to make a judgement about standards of attainment, but in the lessons that were seen, achievement was satisfactory.
153. The teaching seen was satisfactory overall, though not all year groups could be observed. It made good use of resources, such as internet information about the effects of alcohol which the Year 9 pupils had to research for themselves, and the careers programme as a basis for target setting in Year 10. However, time was not well used, particularly in the Year 10 tutorial lesson which, by being linked to a Year

10 assembly, led to a considerable amount of the lesson time being spent walking back and forth and re-constituting pupil groups. This meant that group discussion and pair work was difficult to establish and sustain and the lesson was not properly concluded. Tutorial members of staff conducting these sessions were not given adequate guidance from the course co-ordinator as to what the pupils were expected to achieve.

154. Although some very good **citizenship** is being delivered, this is inconsistent across Years 7 to 11. As well as being closely linked to the delivery of personal, social and health education, described above, a number of major topics, such as international trade, saving and spending, environmental conservation, are delivered across the curriculum through other subjects. An audit was done to ensure complete coverage of the first two strands of the citizenship curriculum through subject lessons. However, not all subject staff are secure in their understanding of what they have to deliver in this area and as a result, though some very good subject/citizenship teaching was seen, the great part of the subject-based delivery was inconsistent in content and style. Because this is not monitored, there is no record of where different groups of pupils have received their citizenship entitlement, and because pupils keep no separate citizenship written work it was not possible to make a judgement about overall standards or achievement in the subject. Citizenship work is not at present assessed separately, or reported to parents, according to national requirements, though an assessment and reporting scheme has been planned to begin next year.
155. The third strand of the citizenship curriculum, opportunities for developing skills of participation and responsible action, is extremely well provided for through the school council, the local Youth Forum, regular charity fundraising and many other events run by the pupils. There is no doubt, from the general ethos, that this school produces good citizens, but due to the omissions in present provision there is no certainty that all pupils are enjoying their full entitlement to the subject.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	4	100.0	78.3	25.0	21.6	40	28.5
Biology	13	100.0	63.5	46.2	10.4	42.3	19.8
Chemistry	12	100.0	70.3	50.0	13.2	42.5	23.0
Classical studies	2	100.0	89.1	100.0	36.0	55.0	36.5
Communication studies	3	100.0	87.2	100	24.9	60	32.8
Drama	4	100.0	86.6	50.0	19.8	50	30.9
Economics	12	100.0	71.6	91.7	18.6	56.7	25.8
English literature	8	100.0	86.2	62.5	17.4	50.0	29.7
French	10	100.0	79.8	70.0	19.4	53.0	28.2
Design and technology	6	100.0	72.6	83.3	13.9	51.7	24.3
Geography	9	100.0	75.5	88.9	20.4	55.6	27.0
German	3	100.0	81.6	100.0	18.8	53.3	28.8
History	11	100.0	82.2	54.5	20.8	47.3	29.2
Information technology	1	100.0	66.6	100.0	8.8	50.0	20.6
Mathematics	26	96.2	59.9	38.5	14.1	40.4	20.5
Music	4	100.0	79.8	100	16.9	55.0	27.5
Other languages	4	100.0	82.5	80.0	47.7	56.0	37.8
Other social studies	9	100.0	67.8	100.0	15.1	55.6	23.2
Physics	10	100.0	66.4	60.0	14.8	45.0	22.4
Sociology	4	100.0	72.1	75.0	19.6	55.0	25.9
Sports/PE studies	5	100.0	72.2	80.0	11.8	54.0	22.8
Total	166	99.4	73.3	65.7	16.6	48.8	25.3

### *Level 3 GCE A 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	20	100.0	98.3	90.0	50.2	109.0	87.1
Biology	62	100.0	96.6	83.9	40.0	102.9	79.3
Business studies	1	100.0	98.9	100.0	39.4	120.0	81.8
Chemistry	64	100.0	97.7	70.3	50.0	99.7	85.7
Classical studies	9	100.0	99.6	77.8	58.1	106.7	92.8
Communication studies	43	100.0	99.2	95.3	40.4	115.8	83.5
Economics	51	100.0	98.8	90.2	54.3	112.5	89.8
English literature	65	100.0	99.4	93.8	44.9	110.5	85.5

French	29	100.0	99.0	96.6	53.1	114.5	88.9
Design and technology	7	100.0	97.8	71.4	35.0	94.3	77.9
Geography	44	100.0	98.8	86.4	46.4	107.3	85.2
German	11	100.0	98.6	81.8	49.6	112.7	86.3
History	57	100.0	99.0	94.7	45.6	109.5	85.1
Mathematics	116	100.0	96.8	86.2	56.6	109.7	89.5
Music	11	100.0	98.2	100.0	37.1	120.0	79.5
Other languages	10	100.0	97.3	90.0	66.7	116.0	95.6
Other social studies	30	100.0	97.4	80.0	42.5	106.7	81.6
Physics	49	98.0	96.7	75.5	45.3	102.0	82.6
Religious studies	17	100.0	99.1	100.0	49.5	116.5	87.4
Sociology	15	100.0	98.5	100.0	45.3	113.3	84.6
Sports/PE studies	10	100.0	97.8	70.0	30.9	102.0	75.4
Total	732	99.9	97.8	86.6	42.9	108.4	82.5

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

156. The focus was on English Literature and French. No students follow an English Language course. One lesson of **German** and one lesson of **Russian** were sampled. In the German lesson students were developing a high degree of fluency because of the variety of relevant and interesting teaching style. In the Russian lesson, teaching and achievement were very good and students were gaining very useful insights into contemporary Russian culture.

### English

Provision in English is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject expertise, consistently high expectations and personal and academic support inspire students to become committed and independent learners.
- The numbers of students studying English literature at A Level have been consistently high and there has been a steady rise in the proportion of A and B grades.
- Extra-curricular activities are well attended and make a significant contribution to students' success.

### Commentary

157. Standards attained in A Level by the end of Year 13 are very high compared with national averages. Students have been increasingly successful in gaining higher grades and in 2004 94 per cent gained A and B grades, the largest percentage for the past three years. Boys make up a minority of the entry but perform well in the examination, with 88 per cent gaining higher grades. This represents very good progress from 2002, when only 73 per cent were awarded A and B grades. Attainment at the top level was outstanding in 2004 with 60 per cent of students gaining an A grade.

158. Students' achievement is excellent because they respond so positively to teachers' high expectations and relish the challenges of stimulating teaching. Standards in lessons and in students' writing are consistently high. Students use accurately a wide range of literary terms and understand how to convey a personal response in an appropriate critical style. By Year 13 they can analyse the effects of language in considerable detail and engage confidently with ideas. They are particularly successful in learning through discussion.
159. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Students quickly make very good progress in Year 12, demonstrating satisfactory study habits and independence of thought. Both of these are in response to extremely well informed and well-planned teaching, which creates a positive ethos and stimulates intellectual curiosity. A very effective blend of challenge and support underpins students' rapid development. During the inspection this was observable both in detailed and constructive marking and in all the lessons seen. In the most successful lessons, teachers are especially skilful at giving students space to explore their responses to texts and to develop ideas at length through class discussion. At the same time, they set a very challenging agenda, expecting students to use independent research to prepare for lessons in detail. Students are very efficient at recording key points whilst also taking an active role in discussion. The ability of students in Year 13 to reflect on their own learning and on connections between the various elements of their course is impressive. Their experience of A Level provides an ideal grounding for those intending to study English at university.
160. Leadership is very good and management is good. A Level study is considerably enriched by theatre visits, excursions, writers in school, and especially by the literary societies, one for each year group in the sixth form. A very strong team of teachers is led with great enthusiasm and conviction by the head of department. Careful pairing of teachers in the A Level team means that students experience a helpful range of approaches and specialisms and they appreciate this. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.

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

161. Students' high standards of literacy enable them to make the most of learning opportunities. Fluent and articulate in formal situations, they pursue topics with confidence in class discussion and thus learn effectively from one another as well as from their teachers. High levels of competence in reading support individual research. They are efficient at selecting material from books and from the internet and can evaluate its usefulness. Several subjects, such as art and history, offer opportunities for extended writing and students meet these demands with great assurance.

### **French**

Provision for French in the sixth form is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are very high.
- Excellent, constructive relationships with students enable teachers to provide individual, focussed support.

- Students derive enormous benefit from contact with native speakers in and out of school.
- Teachers are imaginative and inventive in their approach to planning lessons.

### Commentary

162. Standards in A Level French are very high by the end of Year 13 and in 2004 nearly all candidates gained grades A or B. These results were better than in 2003 and, viewed over the past four years, are part of an improving trend. Standards observed during the inspection were also very high. Students in Years 12 and 13 have no difficulty understanding complex French and are able to express themselves orally and in writing in a variety of contexts and styles. They read literary texts, as well as those derived from different sections of the media, with fluency. Students' achievement is excellent because the level of challenge is very high and they all work to capacity.
163. Teaching and learning are excellent. Students focus constantly on achieving as well as they can, supported by the constant use of French in all lessons by teachers, which drives standards up. Students communicate with each other in French and enjoy their teachers' imaginative ideas, which help them learn. For example, teachers help them gain access to set texts and explore the motivation of the central characters by requiring them to play roles in lessons and act out some of the scenes. Teachers use electronic resources inventively to present language and promote discussion. Teachers expose students to a variety of learning styles and deploy their own excellent knowledge of French culture and society to enhance students' learning. Students fully develop their understanding of the grammatical framework and like the fact that it is integrated seamlessly into the course. Teachers mark students' work thoroughly and accurately, have excellent knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses, and give them plenty of useful practice with past examination papers. Students' writing improves in range and style as they progress through the course.
164. Leadership and management of French in the sixth form are excellent. The teachers work extremely well as a team, dividing the responsibilities for different parts of the course efficiently between them. The department has been effective in creating an environment in which teachers are innovative in their approach and teamwork is excellent. Staff organise a huge range of extra-curricular activities, which enhance learning, including the opportunity to do work experience in France, see French films in London and have regular, individual sessions with the experienced French assistant to practise speaking. Clear line management arrangements mean the department's work is very well monitored and staffing resources are expertly managed for maximum benefit. There has been excellent improvement since the last inspection, with improvements in teaching and learning, accompanied by rising standards.

### MATHEMATICS

The school offers A Level mathematics and A Level further mathematics, both of which were part of the mathematics inspection. Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at A Level are consistently well above average and are very high at further mathematics.

- Teaching focuses sharply on developing an understanding of key concepts and their application.
- The students are highly motivated and have a great desire to be successful.
- There are some inconsistencies in teaching and learning which management has not focused on sufficiently.
- The subject is very popular and large numbers of students choose to study mathematics in the sixth form.

## Commentary

165. Achievement is very good throughout Years 12 and 13. This is largely because there is much highly effective teaching and the students have very positive attitudes to their studies. Students enter the sixth form with high GCSE grades and all but a very few meet or exceed targets based on their GCSE results. A Level results have improved since the last inspection, as has the overall quality of provision. Results in A Level mathematics are consistently well above average, with large numbers of students gaining A or B grades; failures are very rare. Further mathematics results are even more impressive. Overall A Level results in 2004 were very high and in the top five per cent of schools nationally. There is a slight difference in performance by gender, with male students gaining better results than females. However, this difference is not particularly significant given the well above average standards throughout the sixth form.
166. Mathematics is the most popular subject in the sixth form in terms of the number of students taking mathematics courses. It also attracts considerable numbers of students from other schools, including to the further mathematics course. This can mean there are some variations in skills and experiences even though students need to have an A\* or A grade at GCSE. Initial teaching successfully focuses well on ensuring that basic skills, such as in algebra, are secure and can support the students' learning as they move through the sixth form. These basic skills are very good and are accompanied by logical, step-by-step presentations of solutions to problems. Teachers strongly emphasise the need to model a problem through the drawing of a diagram or sketch graph so that the students can visualise clearly how to develop their solutions. This is effective, particularly for weaker students. Current standards are well above average in both Years 12 and 13, with students mostly working at their target grades. However, there is evidence that the thoroughness of revision as examinations approach programmes could well raise these standards higher given recent changes to the A Level syllabus specifications.
167. The students are keen, attentive and very supportive of each other. They are also competitive and want to do well. They report that they like the immediate feedback that they get on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They have great capacity for hard work and appreciate the availability of their teachers if they are having difficulties. Teaching and learning are very good overall, although there is scope for some lessons to be even better. Teachers have a high level of subject expertise which is seen through the clarity of their explanations and their skill at adapting lessons when students are experiencing difficulties. They have high expectations of the students' standards, commitment and ability to think and reason. This helps to generate considerable pace to students' learning. The use of new technology varies considerably, but is not used sufficiently consistently to enhance teaching and learning. Schemes of work are fairly limited and have not built this aspect into sixth form work. Several teachers are highly experienced and have taught

the material for many years. However, although their lessons are well-structured, lesson plans are not consistently clear. By contrast, some teachers plan carefully to clear learning objectives with starter activities as well as thorough review sessions. The style adopted of new theory, worked examples followed by the students tackling questions, works very well but has the potential to be even more effective with greater student participation, particularly in question and answer sessions.

168. The leadership and management of the subject in the sixth form is satisfactory overall. There is not a member of staff with any specific responsibility for leadership of this large subject in the sixth form other than the head of department. Areas for development are starting to be identified more systematically and then used to inform planning. However, the subject plan contains little that is directly aimed at the development of sixth form teaching and provision. The departmental evaluation has rightly identified the need to make better use of assessment information to support learning. Except for that of newly qualified teachers, the monitoring of teaching has not focused on the sixth form. This has limited the opportunity to identify and share good practice so that greater consistency is brought to lesson planning and the use of information and communication technology. The most able students are well catered for, particularly through the further mathematics course, but there is little further enrichment of the students' mathematical experiences.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

169. The students' level of competency in mathematics is excellent. These skills are used to good effect in many subjects to support learning and enhance achievement. Most students either have a high grade at GCSE or are studying mathematics to A Level. Consequently, their basic number and algebra skills are very good and teachers can rely on their accuracy in other subjects. Most students also have the ability to reason mathematically and to model solutions through the use of diagrams and graphs. Their mathematical skills are put to particularly good use in the science subjects where there is much evidence that their high levels of competency supports achievement well. Their statistical skills are also put to very good use in subjects such as geography. There is no overall policy on the development of skills in other subjects but this is not significantly impeding the students' standards or their achievement.

### **SCIENCE**

170. In science, the focus was on biology and chemistry but one physics lesson was also sampled. This lesson was very well planned and the teacher had very good subject knowledge. He knew the individual students' strengths and weaknesses and gave very good individual feedback during the lesson. The pace of learning and the achievement of students were very good.

#### **Biology**

Provision in biology is **very good**.

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

- Standards in A Level examinations are very high, with a very high proportion of students gaining higher grades.



- Achievement is very good because of very good teaching that makes the most of high levels of student motivation.
- Teamwork and leadership are very good and students are very positive about the courses, ensuring that high numbers choose this increasingly popular subject.
- Assessment information is used well to stretch and challenge students.
- Marking does not always give sufficient feedback to help students to improve their work.

## Commentary

171. Standards in the 2004 AS and A Level examinations were very high, continuing the pattern set in 2003. A very high proportion of students gained A and B grades. Nearly all the students achieved passes and about 80 per cent reached their minimum target grade. On average, students did better in biology than in their other subjects, with female students performing significantly above average in this respect. Standards seen on the inspection are well above average in Years 12 and 13, with a high proportion of students, including those with special educational needs, achieving very well. Standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are well above average, making a substantial contribution to the students' very good progress and achievement.
172. These results have been achieved because of very good teaching that stretches and challenges students, building on their very positive attitudes and high levels of motivation, so that learning is very good. Students are very satisfied with the courses and a very high proportion of them continue from AS Level to gain good passes at A Level. Teachers have high expectations, manage their lessons very well and use their excellent subject knowledge to communicate their enthusiasm to students. In response to this, students are always very well behaved and conscientious, although they are often quite passive in lessons. The most successful teaching engages students in lively debate and discussion, as in one excellent Year 12 lesson on the structure of DNA, in which the teacher used her excellent subject knowledge to communicate an infectious enthusiasm that encouraged high standards and very active participation from high attaining students. The students have plenty of opportunities to undertake experimental work, reaching well above average standards as a result. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, students showed a very good understanding of key ideas when carrying out an experiment to investigate enzyme activity. Teachers have access to very good new technology equipment and they use it very well to enhance their lessons. For example, in another lesson on the structure of DNA, the teacher used an interactive computer programme to clearly demonstrate the structure, eliciting a very positive response from the students.
173. As a result of very good leadership and management, there is a very positive ethos and very good teamwork, with a focus on maintaining high standards. There is a clear sense of purpose and the effectiveness of teaching and learning is monitored through lesson observation. Some monitoring of routine marking takes place but this is not rigorous enough to eliminate inconsistencies in the level of feedback given to students. Very good use is made of assessment data to set minimum target grades and monitor progress, contributing to very good achievement overall. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, with an expansion of the subject whilst maintaining high standards. Accommodation and resources have also been improved to provide a very pleasant environment that enhances the quality of learning.

## Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in A level examinations are well above average, including results at the higher grades, although the proportion of A and B grades is below the school average.
- Students are highly motivated and this helps them to achieve very well, with about three-quarters reaching or exceeding their minimum target grades.
- Practical work is used very well to enhance learning in the subject.
- The subject is very popular and students are very positive about the courses, although some find the step up from GCSE more difficult than in other subjects.
- Assessment is used very well to set targets and monitor progress although occasionally marking could be more informative.

### Commentary

174. Standards attained by students by the end of Year 13 are well above the national average. The proportion of students gaining higher grades (A and B) at A Level in 2004 was below the school average but well above the national average. Students' results in chemistry were slightly below their other subjects but the difference was not significant when compared to the national picture. Standards seen on the inspection are well above average across all aspects of the course. The students' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are well above average and this has a positive effect on standards in the subject.
175. Learning and achievement in Years 12 and 13 are very good, with no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of students, including those with special educational needs. This results from a combination of very good teaching and the students' very good attitudes and high degree of motivation. Teachers manage their classes very well and use their excellent subject knowledge to provide challenging lessons that are often enhanced by practical work. For example, lessons seen during the inspection included effective practical work on the reactions of halogens that extended the students' knowledge and understanding of this aspect of the work. They carry out experiments skilfully and safely, co-operating very well in group work and showing good organisational skills when working individually. New technology is used appropriately to enhance learning through, for example, the use of data-logging equipment. Although they have very positive attitudes to work, the students are often quite passive in lessons and some of them find the transition from GCSE more difficult than in their other subjects. This accounts to some extent for the lower results at the higher grades and for the failure of about a quarter of the students to reach their target grades.
176. Leadership and management in chemistry are very good. Teaching is very well organised and is supported by good schemes of work. Teachers work effectively as a team and there is a focus on continuing to raise standards, with clear development priorities. Some monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning takes place but it has not been robust enough to eliminate inconsistencies in marking and lesson preparation. Assessment data is used well to set minimum target grades and monitor progress. Students are very positive about the teaching and support they receive in the subject and a very high proportion continue into Year 13 to achieve A Level

passes. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, with rising standards, increased uptake of the subject and improvements to resources and accommodation that provide a very good learning environment.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

177. There is no specific teaching of information and communication technology in the sixth form except through the European Driving Licence Course – a key skills course for students who are deemed to need some support. This course is well organised and caters for a minority, largely students who have joined the sixth form from elsewhere. Most activities are completed and assessed electronically although there is timetabled teacher support in lessons. Teaching and learning are good. Achievement is good and students make good progress. Standards seen were close to the national average overall and improving but they were below the school average in the sixth form.

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

178. Teaching with information and communication technology in sixth form lessons is very good and often excellent. A high proportion of the teachers have very good skills and are keen to exploit ICT to help pupils attain very high standards. The well-planned support by specialists, in a significant number of lessons, helps to ensure brisk progress in skill development. A high proportion of students have very good levels of competence, which is used to very good effect in almost all subjects. Standards and achievement are very good overall. Examples of outstanding, imaginative video presentations provided ample evidence of an excellent level of digital video editing in sixth form media studies. In economics the use of interactive whiteboards for presentations by students is very professional and effective.

## **HUMANITIES**

179. The focus subjects for the inspection were geography, government and politics, history and religious education. Sociology was sampled, with one lesson observed and an interview was held with the head of department. The teaching in this lesson was very good and provided students with high levels of challenge. Because of this, they were able to achieve well above average standards and showed a clear commitment to their learning. Coursework standards are particularly high and focus on a very wide range of sociological topics. Students are enthusiastic and independent – they run a very active Sociology Society, for example. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and limits the range of teaching styles that can be used. This is because the room is very small and students are expected to work using either chairs with small writing tables attached or, in several cases, by balancing their books and files on their laps.

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A Level results are very high.
- Excellent student attitudes and very good teaching lead to very good achievement.

- Fieldwork opportunities are not extensive enough to ensure that all students acquire the highest level of skills.
  - Information and communication technology makes an excellent contribution to students' learning.
180. Results at A Level are very high, with an overall improvement over the last three years, though there was a dip in 2003. The achievement of students is very good. Work seen during the inspection shows well above average standards, though the work of some students is no more than average because the department operates an inclusive policy of admitting students with GCSE grade C which is not universal throughout the sixth form.
181. By the end of Year 13, the work of most students shows a very good development of knowledge and skills. Model essays and examination answers show ability to recall and organise this knowledge to a high standard. However, because fieldwork opportunities are limited to one expedition in the sixth form, they do not gain enough first hand experience to ensure that all can approach the fieldwork part of the examination with full confidence.
182. The majority of students in Year 12 can produce high level analyses of topics and are very perceptive about the causes and effects of different factors, for example the results of the social segregation of ethnic communities in Britain's cities. However, there is a noticeable variation between the standards of the highest achieving students and some whose work shows that they do not achieve the same depth of understanding and who do not express themselves so coherently in class discussion. Students use the internet very well to add key research information to their work and their excellent information and communication technology skills enable them to manipulate data speedily and accurately.
183. Retention in sixth form courses is very good. In 2004 all who started completed the A-level course. The high numbers of students choosing geography is a testament to the popularity of the subject, and a number of them have places to read geography and related disciplines at university. Attitudes are excellent; students clearly enjoy their studies and relish opportunities to extend their skills at all times, as was seen in lessons preparing students for coming fieldwork by introducing them to the principles of statistical sampling techniques.
184. Teaching in the sixth form lessons is very good, sometimes excellent. Teachers communicate their excellent geographical knowledge using challenging resources and interesting tasks that engage the students so that they learn very well. Teachers assess students' achievement in lessons by targeted questioning. Homework is used to extend and reinforce the work done in lessons. While all practice questions and essays are marked, there is some inconsistency in the monitoring of notes, which leaves the comparatively weaker students unsure what they have learned.
185. This area of the department's work is very well led and managed. The head of department leads an effective team of specialists, though classroom observations that would help to share best practice are limited by time constraints. Performance data is well-used to track the progress of students. The development plan for the whole department seeks to improve the sixth form fieldwork provision but this has so far been unsuccessful because of external constraints. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Examination results have improved. The quality of teaching has improved considerably with more use of enquiry and discussion

strategies as tools for learning. The courses are more popular than they were and students' attitudes have improved.

## **Government and politics**

Provision in government and politics is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' achievement is excellent because of very good teaching and because of their own very high levels of commitment to their learning.
- Students show high levels of political maturity and awareness.
- Speaking and writing standards are very high.

### **Commentary**

186. A Level results for 2004 were very high compared to the national average. The standards reached by current students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are also very high. Achievement for all groups of students is excellent because of the very good teaching that they receive and also because they are very keen to learn.

187. Students develop a very secure knowledge and understanding of the basic concepts of politics during their time in Year 12. They confidently relate these concepts to contemporary events in Britain. In lessons seen, for example, students compared the leadership styles of Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair when assessing the limits to prime ministerial power. They have excellent skills in independent research and show very high levels of political maturity and awareness. Students in Year 13 continue to deepen their levels of knowledge and understanding, building very effectively on what they have learnt in Year 12. Students in both year groups have very high standards of literacy and are able to write confidently and analytically. In their essays, arguments and explanations lead to very carefully reasoned conclusions. Students speak fluently and with great enthusiasm in class discussions.

188. Teaching is very good. Lessons provide very high levels of intellectual challenge and, as a result of careful planning, students are enabled to become independent learners in a secure environment. Teachers are very enthusiastic about their subject and make excellent use of up-to-date examples to illustrate concepts. Work in one classroom, for example, focused on the legality of imprisoning terrorist suspects without trial. Politics is a popular subject in the school and students regularly go on to study related subjects at university. Teachers make good use of information technology in their lessons.

189. Leadership and management are excellent. Teachers work very well together as a team and are clearly committed to their work.

## **History**

Provision in History is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching and the constructive commitment of students to learning ensures very high standards.
- Teaching provides exemplary guidance on how to improve student's writing.
- Students are supported by an excellent range of resources.
- Students make the best of the teaching by collaborating to share and extend their learning.

## Commentary

190. Standards are very high. A Level results in 2004 were very high and within the top 5 per cent of all schools nationally. All students entered gained the Advanced Extension Award. Standards of work seen were well above average.
191. Achievement is excellent. Higher attaining students work at their capacity to obtain A grades and those with lower predicted grades do better than expected. Essays have suitable depth and excellent analytical skills. An investigation of pre-1914 Bolshevism utilised the work of four historians and showed excellent awareness of contemporary historical debate. Overviews of events in Ireland 1800 to 1921 were excellent and so meet the requirements of the synoptic paper.
192. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are very well prepared so that no time is wasted and pupils are actively involved in their learning. Teaching displays very good subject knowledge and provides a wide range of resources, along with the well stocked library, to enable depth and breadth in learning. Marking is very thorough to correct and add to student's factual knowledge. There is exemplary written feedback on how to improve the drafting of essays so as to address all aspects of the questions. Students are very enthusiastic learners, show great confidence in the teaching, and work together very well to clarify their learning. They make strong and thoughtful contributions so that they learn from each other.
193. Leadership and management are excellent. The examination courses are excellently led and managed so that there is a focus on the exact requirements of the examination specification. There is a very high level of expertise shown in the choice of resources to support learning and in the assessment of learning to support improvement. Management leads to high levels of consistency so that recent staffing difficulties were overcome with no negative impact on learning.
194. Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent. There has been sustained improvement in standards so that in the three year rolling averages there has been improvement from 67 per cent A and B grades in 1999 to 80 per cent in 2004.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **excellent**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is excellent because of excellent teaching and excellent attitudes to their own learning.
- Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates and participate fully in their lessons.

- Students are provided with excellent levels of intellectual rigour in their lessons and react very positively.

## **Commentary**

195. Examination results in both 2003 and 2004 were very high, with almost every student achieving a grade A or B. Current standards are also very high and students' achievement is excellent both because of the very high quality of teaching provided for them and because of their own very positive attitudes towards the subject.
196. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates and participate actively in all their lessons. Essays show a considerable depth of understanding – students write with confidence and express their ideas clearly. In lessons seen, students were able to sustain a critical line of argument and justify a point of view with great skill and enthusiasm. All students respond very well to the increased challenges presented by the greater complexity of ideas studied in the sixth form. This is particularly impressive considering that not all have studied the subject at GCSE.
197. Teaching and learning are excellent. A particular strength of the teaching is the level of intellectual challenge that students are expected to cope with. A group of students, for example, have recently written to Richard Dawkins challenging his views on religion. At the same time, teachers work very hard to make lessons accessible and enjoyable. Students react to the enthusiastic, highly knowledgeable and lively teaching with excellent attitudes and the determination to succeed.
198. Leadership and management are excellent. Teachers work very well together and are very committed to their work. Departmental documentation is supportive and non-bureaucratic. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

199. There were no focus subjects in this curriculum area. One lesson of the A Level product design course was sampled and work was scrutinised.
200. The A Level product design course at the school is very successful. Standards of attainment are excellent. A Level achievement has been excellent for some time with the majority of pupils getting A or B grades. The design folders seen were of an exceptionally high standard. Students use new technology well in both designing and in manufacturing which creates work of the highest standards. Their understanding of the history of design in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is very good. Students research products very well and create imaginative designs. These are realised well in a variety of materials using a variety of construction methods. The teaching observed was excellent. The lesson was very well planned and it motivated students. Very good feedback was given to students on how to improve their work.

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

201. Art, music and media studies were the focus subjects in this curriculum area. One **drama** lesson was sampled. This lesson was excellent. The teacher had a high level of subject expertise and students were constantly challenged to improve. His assessments of their work were rigorous and the students' ability to grasp guidance

and new concepts led to an outstanding pace of learning. A Level results in drama are very high compared with the national average.

## **Art**

Provision in art is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at A Level are consistently very high as a result of the inspirational teaching that the students receive.
- Students' excellent achievement flourishes in a department where independent learning is the norm.
- Students increase their knowledge and understanding and skill development as a result of the enrichment opportunities provided.
- The accommodation for sixth form studies is inadequate for the size of groups and the innovative work undertaken.

### **Commentary**

202. The standard on entry to the course is very high. Standards of the few students declaring AS level were very high in 2003 and high in 2004 compared with national averages. Students entering the course at this level from other schools, comment on their recognition that high standards in this school grow from personal interests and independent learning rather than the imposed house style many have previously experienced.

203. By the end of Year 13 standards are very high and some are of degree standard. Results at A Level over the past three years have been very high against national averages. More females than male students take the subject at this level. Only female students achieved A grades in both 2003 and 2004. In 2004, due to personal circumstances beyond the control of the department, a few students under-achieved.

204. Achievement in Year 12 lessons is excellent overall. Students draw extensively on previous knowledge and understanding of art movements and individual artist's styles. This informs their choice of media and methods of working. In this studio ethos all feel comfortable to risk take with new techniques such as soap carving. Others break conventions about what art is, for example by providing certificates of authenticity to decaying fruit in jars. Conceptual art underpins two and three-dimensional work. Constraints of space limit the scale of work undertaken. In the current fruit and flower project, sketchbooks offer a rich visual record of how experimentation has informed outcomes. They also contain pages of writing offering a glimpse into the creative process; the frustrations felt and the solutions sought.

205. Achievement in Year 13 is excellent. Attendance at life drawing classes has resulted in figure drawings which convey the artist's command over the media chosen and the sensitive understanding and rendering of the human form. An excellent nude self-portrait, representing the artist's personal relationship with God, draws on the best of the classical tradition in painting and the contemporary emphasis on self. Access to the Internet, trips to galleries in this country and abroad, broaden knowledge and understanding of both art historical movements and contemporary artists. One student has been inspired by direct contact with a teacher/artist having a deep interest



in knitting as an art form. Another student takes the current theme of 'ritual' and draws on her recent experiences in stage management to explore the darker side of contemporary society. Students say that they are enjoying the course, feel challenged, supported and valued but also admit to being 'intimidated' because Year 12 students have such innovative ideas.

206. Teaching and learning are always very good and in three-quarters of lessons seen are excellent. All teachers are very knowledgeable and share a range of experiences as artists and examiners. These teachers, aided by the technician, make a very effective team. One teacher has received the award of top teacher in London. Another has had twelve months exchange teaching in America and has brought back useful strategies that have informed all teachers' practice. They all use new technology well for presentations but one teacher does not have the quality of equipment enjoyed by the other two so cannot use information and communication technology as effectively in lessons. Assessment for planning and learning is a very important part of this practice, with students encouraged to take the lead and teachers using assessment effectively to diagnose problems and help students to move forward.
207. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The leader has a very clear vision of what is needed at this level. He draws on local and international sources in order to help students realise their potential. Documentation is excellent and analysis of assessment data informs planning and students' learning. Displays, both in the department and around the school, celebrate students' achievement. The lack of video conferencing with other schools is an area that has not been explored. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good in terms of teaching, learning, achievement and standards but the accommodation for the sixth form has not kept pace with student numbers or needs.

## **Media studies**

Provision is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are very high and achievement is excellent.
- There has been significant improvement since the last inspection.
- Subject expertise, enthusiasm and good teamwork are evident in the consistently high quality of the teaching.
- Excellent accommodation and resources provide exciting opportunities for teaching and learning.
- The subject is led and managed with skill, energy and vision.

### **Commentary**

208. Although there is a marked drop in the entry for A Level media studies in 2005, the number of students now in Year 12 matches the high level entry of 2004 and previous years.
209. The standards attained by the end of Year 13 are very high. The results attained by the 43 students who took the A level examination in 2004 were very high compared with the national average. The percentage gaining A and B grades was well above the national average and also above the school's average figure. There was a high

level of added value and a good gender distribution. 2004 was a year of high achievement, continuing and improving on the good record of the department in previous years.

210. Work seen during the inspection shows that these high standards are being maintained and achievement is excellent. Although no lessons could be observed in Year 13, folders of good work provided evidence of students working at secure A/B levels, with knowledge of a wide range of media. Key concepts are well understood, research findings and production notes carefully organised and very well presented. Perceptive and detailed analyses of a BBC documentary series, for example, show satisfactory understanding of the genre and of the influences and constraints which affect its production and reception.
211. Students' technical achievements in the first term of the AS Level year are impressive. In devising, production planning, performing, shooting and editing the opening sequence of a thriller, Year 12 students demonstrated a range of practical skills as well as imagination and wit in their use of a familiar genre. Although the majority of students embarking on the A Level course have already studied the subject for GCSE, a sizeable minority have not. With skilful teaching and good student response those new to the subject make rapid progress.
212. The very good A Level teaching is shared by the head of department and a teacher new to the school this year. A very successful team, they bring experience, excellent subject knowledge and keen enjoyment to their work. The planning and the preparation of lessons are exemplary. Well chosen materials and topics meet the examination requirements and extend students' range of knowledge and competence. Teaching is challenging and stimulating, encouraging students to evaluate a wide range of media texts, question assumptions and produce evidence for judgements. Students respond by working keenly and creatively. In the lessons observed, however, they were sometimes rather reticent in whole class discussion, answering teachers' questions but seldom venturing opinions or challenging those of others. The high quality of their individual work suggests that all would benefit from more lively interaction. They have much to learn from one another and there is scope for more argument and initiative in some lessons. Seminar style seating and teaching, when appropriate, encourages this.
213. Leadership and management of the subject and its facilities are excellent. Following the last report, media studies was established as a separate department, and is no longer part of English. It has a long history as a popular and successful A Level option and now has separate status and excellent purpose built accommodation, completed in 2000. The outstanding quality of the available resources demands not only a high degree of technical competence and confidence but also time and dedication if they are to be used to maximum effect. Currently without any technical assistance, the head of department works very hard to ensure that students have every opportunity to use the facilities and to develop high level skills. The department's contribution to the school's achievement in information technology is remarkable.
214. Documentation and records are very well maintained, with good use of data and targets for action. The guidance given to students is thorough and well-informed; assessment procedures take careful account of examination criteria and of the needs of individual students. Another strong feature of the department is its liaison with other organisations, including the British Film Institute, the BBC and the examination boards. Through these contacts, and in its plans for training and expansion, the

department is taking a lead in the development of media studies as an important and challenging A Level subject, both within and outside the school.

215. The changes in subject status, accommodation and resources show that there has been significant improvement in media studies since the previous inspection. There has also been a steady rise in attainment levels. In 1999, 76.5 percent of students achieved A and B grades. In 2004, 95.4 percent reached this level. Media studies contribute much to the continuing success and expansion of sixth form work.

## Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and results are very high, with performance being a particularly strong feature.
- Students' achievement is excellent because of the high quality of teaching and learning, and excellent motivation and commitment from the students.
- Extra-curricular work in the sixth form is stimulating and enriching.
- Improvement since the last inspection is excellent because of excellent leadership and management.

### Commentary

216. Standards at the end of Year 13 are very high compared with the national average. A Level results in 2004 were very high with 10 of the 11 students achieving grade A. These were significantly higher than those achieved nationally. In the AS level examination in 2004 15 out of 19 students achieving grades A or B. Standards seen during the inspection in Years 12 and 13 are also very high. Compositions are not only technically highly competent but coherent and imaginative pieces of music. Standards of playing are exceptional. Students' knowledge and understanding of the historical development of music are shown in analytical and critical essays, the best of which are articulately argued. Their chorale writing in the style of Bach, shows very good understanding of key relationships and cadence.
217. Students' achievement is excellent mainly because they are strongly committed to music in the school, because their motivation is as high as possible, and because teaching and learning are excellent. Extra-curricular work, instrumental standards and superb facilities also influence this. They talk with passion and excitement about the music they have experienced in the school, such as a performance of Mozart's *Requiem* and the Christmas Concerts. They talk glowingly about the warm and friendly atmosphere and stimulating ethos created by the teachers. Those students who start the school in the sixth form concur strongly with this view.
218. Teaching is excellent. Lessons are enjoyable, stimulating and challenging. Much of the students' success springs from an all encompassing approach to music in which the strong relationships between all its aspects are confidently used and developed. Students' understanding of theory and musical style is strongly rooted in performance. For instance they begin their harmony lesson by sight singing a chorale perfectly, then use this to study key and cadence. After performing part of the first movement of Haydn's 26<sup>th</sup> *Symphony*, and then finding the main characteristics of Haydn's style,

they compare this with Wagner's style in the prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*. The discussions between teachers and students shows the excellent relationships enjoyed through sharing the teachers' expertise and their own growing interest and knowledge. Students understand their strengths and weaknesses because teachers' assessment of their work is very thorough. Regular written and verbal feedback is focused informatively on individual students' needs.

219. The department's leadership and management, new this year, are excellent and held in high regard. High standards have been maintained and improved, as have teaching and learning. Improvement since the previous inspection is therefore excellent.

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

The focus subject for the inspection was physical education. No other courses in this curriculum area are taken by students.

### **Physical Education**

Provision in physical education is **excellent**.

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

- Standards are very high and students' achievement is excellent.
- Teaching is very good and teachers use interesting and varied ways to help students progress.
- Students' attitudes are excellent and they have excellent relationships with their teachers.
- Students are very well informed about their progress and constructive advice is given to help them improve.

#### **Commentary**

220. Standards at A Level and AS Level have been very high over several years. Analysis of results indicates that students' achievement is excellent. Present students are attaining equally high standards and their achievement is excellent. Students attain high practical standards in their own specialist sports and have a very good knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. Their learning is particularly good because teachers give them many opportunities to discuss with one another and to relate the theory to their practical experiences. Students' personal performance portfolios are very well presented and include accurate and thorough evaluations. Their essays construct excellent arguments and often give well related practical examples.

221. Teaching is very good because teachers plan a wide range of activities that interest and challenge students. This promotes very good learning. Teachers' use of the inter-active white board provides interesting visual stimuli in lessons. However, teaching is not always in the same room and this limits the use of appropriate resources. There is a strong emphasis on developing information and communication technology skills and students have prepared excellent power point presentations. They are encouraged to make use of the shared area of the intranet where study notes are posted. Students' files are marked thoroughly with comments that help students to improve their work. Students recognise and appreciate the amount of help

given to them by their teachers, for example, when planning their course work portfolios. Homework is used well to give students experience in answering examination questions and to consolidate their knowledge. Students are extremely positive about physical education, have excellent relationships with their teachers and take an active part in the subject.

222. The leadership of the department is excellent and management very good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. The head of department has broadened provision and consistently maintained very high standards. Statistical analysis is not detailed enough to plan for individual needs and future improvements. Currently three teachers deliver each unit of the course. Students benefit from this diversity of expertise and from their different teaching approaches. Students report how much they value the courses because they provide an accreditation linked to proposed careers in sports science, for example.

## **BUSINESS**

223. Economics was the only focus subject of this curriculum area. One A Level **business studies** lesson was sampled. The one candidate entered for A Level business studies in 2004 attained a grade A. In the lesson observed teaching and learning were excellent, standards were good overall and many students were working at a very good standard. Very good use of new technology and student involvement in successful enterprise activities, are strong features of business studies courses at advanced level.

### **Economics**

Provision for economics is **excellent**.

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

- Standards in economics at advanced level are excellent.
- Teaching is excellent, with students actively involved in challenging learning activities.
- Assessment and recording procedures and practice are excellent.
- Excellent use is made of new technology to enhance teaching and learning.
- Extra-curricular learning opportunities are very good.
- Teaching strategies can be restricted because there are insufficient dedicated rooms allocated to the department.

### **Commentary**

224. Standards attained by the end of Year 13 are very high compared with the national average. At A Level in 2004 three-quarters of candidates attained grade A and all candidates attained the higher A/B grades. This was an improvement over the very high levels of recent years. Results were above the school average and very high compared with the national average. The number of candidates is well above the national average. Girls' achievement was slightly better than boys' but this was less than the national difference.

225. Achievement by the end of Year 13 is excellent mainly because of excellent teaching. Students are required to play a full and active part in lessons which provide many opportunities for them to demonstrate impressive achievement. Very demanding

tasks are set requiring detailed and extensive research. These tasks supplement and support very detailed analysis of economic theory. Teachers ensure that learning objectives are met and that lessons include very effective plenary sessions to reinforce learning. Information and communication technology plays a very important part in teaching and learning and its use is excellent. Students have very good information and communication technology skills in a wide range of applications which are used very effectively in research, analysis and presentation. The use of Interactive whiteboards for teacher and student presentations is very well developed and highly effective, when they are available. Many excellent group presentations were seen in which students were able to demonstrate the impressive depth and breadth of their knowledge and their ability to relate theory to practice. Some students were able to make their presentations and answer probing questions without recourse to notes. Departmental learning resources on the school intranet are available to students at home via the Internet. The department also runs successful extracurricular activities to provide more challenge and experience for students.

226. The leadership and management of the economics and business department is excellent. A highly effective team ethos is very well established; students in parallel groups have the same experiences although very good attention is paid to individual needs. Monitoring and assessment procedures are very well established and used very effectively. Great attention is paid to monitoring progress and attainment using the department's own sophisticated computerised system, which provides regular detailed feedback to students and parents. Students know, in detail, what they need to do to improve further. The department does not have a room for each member of staff which necessitates frequent movement. This can preclude the use of the new technology facilities which are put to such good use by teachers when they are available. Improvement since the last inspection is excellent.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

227. No personal, social and health education course is provided for the sixth form, though there are many opportunities for the students to enhance their social development.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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