

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **WALLINGFORD SCHOOL**

Wallingford, Oxfordshire

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123261

Headteacher: Mr J Owens

Lead inspector: Mr M G Michell

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> October 2004

Inspection number: 269484

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1070
School address:	St. George's Road Wallingford Oxfordshire
Postcode:	OX10 8HH
Telephone number:	01491 837115
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Ebbs

Date of previous 4<sup>th</sup> October 1999 inspection:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Wallingford School is a medium sized mixed comprehensive school which has achieved Sports College status with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2004. It has Sportsmark and Healthy Schools status and was redesignated as an Investor in People in 2003. The socio-economic backgrounds of its pupils are slightly more favourable than is the case for schools nationally and about 7% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. The attainment of its pupils on entry to the school is also slightly above the national average. Only about 3% of its pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, which is very low, and currently no pupils have English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is about the national average at 16% and 1.6% of pupils have statements of special educational needs, which is below the national average. The school population is stable. About half of the pupils stay on into the sixth form at the school, which is of average size. Pupils' attainment on entry to the sixth form is broadly in line with the national average for sixth forms.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3670	Mick Michell	Lead inspector	
9569	Jan Leaning	Lay inspector	
30784	Angela Bradshaw	Team inspector	English, Drama, Media Studies, Theatre Studies
33595	Martin Marsh	Team inspector	Mathematics
18453	Colin Lower	Team inspector	Science, Physics
19613	Susan Pounce	Team inspector	Information & communication technology (ICT)
31963	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Design & technology
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Geography
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	History, Special Educational Needs
30888	Lieve Walsh-Nelissen	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
12475	Stuart Johnson	Team inspector	Music
15312	Kay Lord	Team inspector	Physical Education
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Citizenship, Religious Education, Work-related Learning
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Wallingford is a **good** school which is improving. It offers **good** value for money. Teaching, achievement, leadership and management are all **good** and standards are above average.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching and learning are good overall in all year groups;
- The school is very well led by its headteacher;
- The teaching in the sixth form is a strength of the school;
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good overall, though a few lessons are disrupted by the poor behaviour of a small minority of pupils;
- Provision in citizenship is currently unsatisfactory;
- Staff development, including support of student teachers, is very good;
- The school's recently acquired sports college status is already improving links with the community, which are now very good.

Improvement since the school's last inspection has been **good**. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is much better and pupils' spiritual development is now satisfactory. Leadership and management are much improved and school improvement planning is now good. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' work, and the information the school holds on individual pupils, are now good. However, the school is still failing to meet the statutory requirement for collective worship and provides insufficient religious education in years 10, 11 and in the sixth form; both of these were issues at the time of the last inspection.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

The achievement of pupils is **good**. Standards are **above average** in both Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. Results in public examinations were generally higher in 2004 than in 2003 at all levels, although national comparative data for 2004 are not yet available. The achievement of a minority of pupils, including some of high ability, is not high enough. The school recognises this and has put in place very good procedures to raise the achievement of these pupils.

Pupils' personal qualities are **good** overall. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **satisfactory** overall. Most pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well around the school and in lessons. A very small number of pupils have poor attitudes to learning and disrupt others in a few lessons. Attendance is **good** and punctuality **satisfactory**.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good** overall. More than eight out of ten lessons are well taught and there is almost no unsatisfactory teaching. As a result, pupils make good gains in knowledge, skills and understanding and are productive in their work. In some lessons they are given insufficient opportunities to develop the skills and capacity to work independently. Homework is often used well to support learning, though in a minority of instances it is not well exploited.

The curriculum offered by the school is **good** in Years 7 to 11. It is broad and balanced and offers appropriate opportunities for the range of pupils in the school. However, there is insufficient time allowed for religious education for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and the provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory in all years. Assessment of pupils' work has improved since the last inspection and the school's chosen approach to helping pupils to improve their work is good. Pupils' care, guidance and support are **good**. The school has **good** links with parents, **good** links with other schools and **very good** links with the community. These are still improving through the school's newly acquired sports college status.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are both **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is **very good**. There is a strong sense of shared purpose within the school and all within it are interested in how to improve. This includes the governing body, whose exercise of their role is **good**, though they do not ensure with sufficient rigour that the school meets all its statutory requirements. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and is taking appropriate action to secure improvements. Recent changes in leadership and management arrangements within the school are having the intended effects, for example, in a focus on learning within classrooms and in the implementation of an innovative policy for assessing pupils' work and helping them to improve. There has been an increased focus on pupils' achievement and the school shows a strong determination to make this as high as possible.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

**Parents** are pleased with the school overall, though a few question the usefulness of some homework and whether the school provides sufficient challenge for its ablest pupils. Inspectors agree that homework is used inconsistently. Both the school and inspectors agree that high attainers sometimes need more challenging work.

**Pupils** are largely happy in the school and praise the teaching and the support they are given. A few say that a small proportion of their lessons are spoiled by the behaviour of others and inspectors agree that this is sometimes the case.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Monitor the teaching of citizenship, ensure that it is explicitly identified to pupils in lessons, assess it and report pupils' achievements in it to parents, thus ensuring that statutory requirements are met;

- Continue the work on intervention, including that for gifted and talented pupils, so as to raise the achievement of those pupils whose achievements are not high enough;
- Ensure that the achievements of the majority of pupils are never hampered by the poor behaviour of a few;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure sufficient time is provided to teach religious education;
- provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.



## THE SIXTH FORM

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very effective** sixth form with **satisfactory** cost-effectiveness. All teaching is at least good in the sixth form and much of it is **very good** or excellent. As a result, students' learning is very good and they make swift progress in both Years 12 and 13.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are both very good.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- Students take great pride in the sixth form and in the school as a whole.
- For a few pupils aged 16, the range of courses offered is not wide enough to attract them to stay on into the sixth form.

### 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>Very good</b> in English literature and media studies; <b>good</b> in French. Students achieve well or very well in all these subjects.
Mathematics	<b>Very good.</b> Very good teaching throughout and excellent teaching in further mathematics leads to above average results.
Science	<b>Very good</b> provision in physics, where teaching is very good and students thus achieve well.
Information and communication technology	<b>Very good.</b> High quality teaching and leadership mean that students are achieving very well.
Humanities	Geography. <b>Very good</b> , with AS and A level results improving recently, to be above the national average, through very good teaching and learning. History. <b>Very good.</b> Students' excellent attitudes and very good teaching lead to above average results in AS and A Levels.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Satisfactory</b> in three-dimensional (3D) product design, where good teaching and high quality new leadership are already leading to higher achievement.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Good</b> in physical education and <b>very good</b> in theatre studies. Teaching is good, with well structured lessons which help students achieve well.

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

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

**Very good.** Students are very positive about their opportunities and enjoy being in the sixth form. They are keen to do well and are very appreciative of all the school has to offer them. Opportunities for leadership and for them to support younger pupils are numerous and varied. They become 'extra friends' to pupils lower down the school, run extra-curricular clubs and supervise at lunch times. Their behaviour provides a very good example.

They are given good support, are encouraged to become self-motivated learners and enjoy their status as young adults. In lessons, attitudes are very good and students work hard; this enables them to make good progress. They have a lead role on the school council and successfully interact with younger pupils. Attendance is good; most students attend regularly and on time and the school has recently introduced a system of recording attendance designed to provide more accurate and improved figures in future.

The support help and guidance students receive is very good and a range of good information successfully helps them make informed choices about their personal goals and futures and whether to go on to further education or into employment. Career guidance is very good and students appreciate the Connexions service and their induction into the sixth form. They say that the school supports their learning well, encourages them to become mature and to take responsibility for their own development. Inclusion is fostered very well and participation in sports, music and the arts is high. Students are very successfully involved with younger pupils; they help with various activities such as running the chess club and supervising at lunchtimes.

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

**Very good.** The sixth form is very well led, with a clear focus on ensuring that students' achievements are as high as possible. Clear structures and high expectations of students, both in terms of academic work and of behaviour, contribute to a very positive culture which enables students to do well. The head of the sixth form and her team are aware of the strengths of the sixth form and what actions are needed, both to maintain the current strengths and to secure improvements. As such, the sixth form is well set to continue to improve.

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

Students have **very positive** views about the sixth form. Overwhelmingly they enjoy their experiences as students and they believe the school, and the sixth form, to be very well run. They find the teaching challenging and demanding and teachers' subject expertise very high. They say that teachers are accessible and helpful and that they are being helped and encouraged to work independently and embark upon research. They find the advice they receive on what they should do when they leave school to be very useful. A minority would have liked better advice on what to study when entering the sixth form and a few believe that the sixth form does not offer a wide enough range of courses.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are **above average** and pupils' achievement is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average by the end of Year 9, though they were lower in 2003 than in 2002 or 2004.
- At GCSE level, standards were average in 2003, showing a decline on the above average standards in 2002. Standards in 2004 were higher.
- At GCE Advanced Level, standards are above average and have shown steady improvement since the last inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is good, and very good in art and in mathematics in Years 7 to 9.
- The achievement of a minority of pupils, including some of high ability, is not high enough.
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) achieve well.

#### Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.3 (34.5)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	38.0 (38.1)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.6 (35.5)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 184 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 2003*

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	52 (59)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (93)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.2 (36.6)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 184 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

1. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 displaying standards which are a little above average overall, though they represent the full range of abilities. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average in comparison with all schools nationally, though in 2003, standards in English were below average. The school's results for 2004 were better than in 2003, though national comparisons for 2004 are not yet available. Thus pupils make good progress overall in Years 7 to 9 and they do as well as pupils from similar schools nationally. The school's performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9 has improved at about the same rate as the national

improvement. The performances of both boys and girls are above the national average for their age group.

2. Pupils' performance in GCSE examinations in 2003, the latest year for which national comparisons are available, was above the national average and average compared to similar schools. Results in both 2002 and 2004 were higher than in 2003. Pupils who took their GCSE examinations in 2003 made less progress than did similar pupils nationally. In the three years 2001-3, boys' results were above national averages for boys, whereas girls' results were close to the national averages for girls.

3. Overall, pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 11. Girls and boys achieve equally well and the very few pupils from ethnic minorities do as well as their peers. Evidence from lessons observed and work analysed indicates that there is scope to raise the attainment of the very ablest pupils. The school's own evaluations support this and a gifted and talented co-ordinator has recently been appointed to tackle this issue. The school has also appointed an intervention co-ordinator, because it recognises that a minority of pupils across the ability range underachieve. These two teachers are already working effectively together and the strategies put in place and proposed are, in the judgement of the inspection team, likely to raise achievement.

4. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in Years 7 to 11, largely because of the well-informed and systematic support they are given both in and out of their classrooms. In 2004 every student with special educational needs achieved at least 2 GCSE grades; most achieved five or six and one pupil achieved ten. These pupils achieve very well in mathematics, where very good support in Year 7 raises their standards, and in art and design, where the very good organisation of lessons enables individual attention where it is needed. In geography and history progress is not so good, due to inconsistent provision that does not cater well enough for their needs.

## Sixth Form

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	87.5 (95.0)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	31.6 (23.1)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	272.2 (261.5)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 72 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

5. The table above is for combined GCE A and AS level courses. The school has a policy of not cashing in on students' AS grades until they reach the end of Year 13, which lowers the above figures. For GCE A Level alone in 2003, 98% of entries gained A-E grades and 43.9% of entries gained A-B grades. Thus standards achieved by Year 13 students in 2003 were above average overall and well above average for male students. There was considerable variation between subjects. At Advanced Supplementary (AS) Level standards were well above the national average in French and psychology and above average in art and design. They were below average in biology and mathematics and well below average in chemistry. However, results are only reported for those students who do not continue with subjects to A2 level. At GCE A-Level they were well above average in English literature, physics and

psychology, and above average in design and technology, geography, physical education and theatre studies. They were below average in biology, business studies and chemistry.

6. During the inspection students' achievements were judged as at least good in all subjects and very good in English literature, physics, art and design and history. Attitudes to work were very positive overall and much work of a high or very high standard was seen. Male and female students achieve equally well and the very few students from ethnic minorities do as well as their peers.

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

The attitudes, values and personal qualities which pupils develop and their attendance are **good**: in the sixth form they are **very good**. Social and moral development is **good**, spiritual and cultural development is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships are very good, so most pupils are keen to learn, behave well and are expected to work hard; a few do not.
- Sixth form students have very positive attitudes and are very successfully involved in taking responsibility around the school.
- The school council is successfully giving pupils a voice and extending opportunities for social interaction.
- Good social and moral activities contribute to good attitudes and behaviour, but too little is done to extend pupils' experience of a multi-cultural society.
- Attendance is good and contributes to pupils' good achievement.

### **Commentary**

7. The very good relationships ensure that pupils' confidence and self-esteem are fostered very successfully and this shows in their lessons; adults provide good role models and most pupils respond very well. Pupils' interest and enthusiasm for school leads to good levels of learning and they treat each other and the adults with respect. They are positive about their experience in school, polite to each other and to the adults and the atmosphere is very friendly. Pupils understand the expectations; they behave well around the school and in most lessons. They say that bullying is not an issue and are confident that when it occurs it is dealt with very quickly. Learning is impeded by low-level disruption in a few classes. Analysis of student and parent questionnaires indicates a mainly positive picture across most aspects of the school. Pupils are particularly pleased with good and helpful teachers, enjoyable lessons and the school and year councils. They show respect for the school environment and handle resources with care.

8. Pupils say that the year and school councils, to which all forms elect representatives, are beginning to give pupils a voice. An overnight stay at a nearby centre was highly rated and provided very good opportunities for pupils to get to know other council members in a relaxed atmosphere. Toilets and lockers have been improved, discussion has taken place about the canteen and healthy eating and pupils are looking forward to a competition aimed at improving the school grounds. This provides a good framework for personal development and the good opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities contribute much to the good attitudes and relationships across the year groups.

9. The school works hard to raise self-esteem by giving good praise and encouragement. Pupils' personal development is fostered well and participation in sports, music and the arts is high. Moral and social development are strong elements and pupils are developing into mature young adults with good social skills. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is provided across the curriculum and is explored through the personal, social and health education programme. Pupils' understanding of life in a multi-faith, multi-cultural world is not well developed. The school does not

fulfil the statutory requirement to have a daily act of collective worship. Pupils are aware of others less fortunate and raise considerable funds to support charities such as Jeans for Genes. The school is extending links with schools in the south of England and in Durban.

10. Attendance in the main school is above the national average and is good. It would be even better, but too many parents take their children on holiday during term time and this affects overall figures. The school actively discourages this practice. Unauthorised absence is above the national average and this is due in part to rigorous monitoring of absence and accurate recording.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.4%	School data:	1.7%
National data:	7.8%	National data:	1.2%

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

### Exclusions

#### Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Any other ethnic group
Information not obtained

#### Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
649	74	1
35	1	
386		

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

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **good** overall. Teaching and learning are both **good**. The curriculum offered is **good**. The care, guidance and support of pupils are **good**. The school has **good** links with parents and **very good** links with other schools and the community.

#### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall. Assessment arrangements are **good** and improving.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and a significant proportion is very good or excellent. This is a major factor in pupils' good achievement
- All teaching in the sixth form is good or better and students' achievement is thus very good.
- Pupils' learning is good, and very good in art and design.
- Homework is well used to support pupils' learning in many cases, though its use is inconsistent.
- Pupils' learning is disrupted in a few cases by the poor behaviour of others.
- Pupils with special educational needs are taught very well when withdrawn, and taught well within mainstream lessons.

#### Commentary

11. The quality of teaching in the main school is good overall and, as a result, pupils learn well. Teaching is very good in art and design, ICT and religious education. Strengths of teaching in the school include teachers' command of their subjects and their good use of teaching assistants. In nearly four out of ten lessons the teaching is very good or excellent and

these lessons are distinguished by the ways in which teachers encourage and engage pupils and match their teaching methods to what they wish the pupils to learn. Teaching is most successful when teachers manage their lessons in ways which provide sufficient challenge for the abilities of the pupils. This is especially important in subjects such as English, where classes are arranged so that they contain pupils from the full ability range. For example, in art and design lessons, low ability pupils are provided with writing frames and this allows them to achieve well. In physical education effective use is made of group and pair work for pupils of all abilities and pupils learn to organise themselves well. Good examples of pupils working in pairs effectively in science and in history were also seen.

12. In some lessons pupils' learning is disrupted by the poor behaviour of others. In a few more although learning is satisfactory, it would be better for the majority if the teachers did not have to give so much attention to managing the behaviour of a few unruly and unmotivated pupils. Overall, though, pupils learn well in their lessons. This is particularly so in art and design where in all years pupils are encouraged to think and express their thoughts independently, which results in a very wide range of innovative work. Homework is used at least satisfactorily in all subjects and very well in art and design, history and religious education.

13. Pupils with special educational needs are very well taught when they are withdrawn from mainstream lessons for additional literacy and some alternative curriculum arrangements in Year 10. Time is not wasted, as they work well, within their individual capacities, to learn new skills or improve those they already have, such as reading or using computers. They are taught well within mainstream lessons by teachers who know about their needs, supported by a large number of teaching assistants who know how to focus their concentration and prevent behaviour problems for those who have emotional difficulties.

## The sixth form

14. Sixth form teaching is a particularly strong feature of the school and all sixth form teaching is good or better. In more than seven out of ten sixth form lessons the teaching is very good or excellent. Teachers have very good command of their subject areas and students comment that they find the work challenging but engaging, with teachers prepared to offer them help if the work is difficult. Very good teaching methods are used in all curriculum areas, with teachers carefully matching their approaches to what they need the students to learn.

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 181 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
16 ( 9 %)	55 ( 30 %)	82 ( 45 %)	27 ( 15 %)	1 ( 1 %)	0	0

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

## The curriculum

The curriculum offered to pupils is **good**. There is a **good** range of extra-curricular activities offering good enrichment. Accommodation and resources are **good**, and **very good** in the sixth form.



## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum for pupils aged 11 to 14 offers good breadth and balance.
- The curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 16 is sufficiently diverse to meet the needs of the pupils.
- Provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- Insufficient time is allowed for the teaching of religious education for pupils aged 14 to 16.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good across all year groups.
- Assessment, a recent priority for the school, is good and improving.

## **Commentary**

15. The curriculum for pupils aged 11 to 14 is broad and balanced and includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum, plus drama and personal social and health education (PSHE). Pupils are taught in a mixture of groups, some grouped by ability and others containing pupils from the full ability range. The curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 16 allows pupils sufficient opportunities for choice and includes options which allow pupils to follow a wide range and number of GCSE and other courses. However, insufficient time is allowed within the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 for religious education and thus the school cannot meet fully the demands of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

16. Provision for citizenship is currently unsatisfactory, though the school has plans to remedy this situation. The teaching of this subject has not been monitored with sufficient rigour, nor is it identified to pupils in lessons. Insufficient time is allowed to teach it and it is neither assessed nor are pupils' achievements in it reported to parents. The school is thus not meeting statutory requirements in this subject.

17. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good across all year groups. The school fully meets the requirements of the new Code of Practice. The department is well staffed by a co-ordinator, two part-time teachers, a managing assistant and fourteen teaching assistants, all of whom have clear roles and responsibilities. The main thrust of support is in mainstream classrooms, so pupils with special needs do not lose social contact with their peers. Additionally, small group and one-to-one sessions are held, where individual needs are very well met. For example a special simplified health and social care curriculum is followed by some Year 10 pupils. The co-ordinator works hard to extend information to all subject staff about how to provide for these pupils in their mainstream lessons, based on their individual education plans. However, at present this area is not as well developed as it might be. The department also provides a sanctuary at lunchtimes and break times for pupils who may find it difficult to socialise with their peers. Support from outside agencies is strong, including weekly visits from an outreach worker from a local special school. The co-ordinator also liaises closely with primary schools, and runs fortnightly drop-in sessions for parents who have concerns they wish to discuss. The department is adequately resourced, except that the accommodation is too small for all the services provided; two or three groups frequently have to share the same room and it is sometimes difficult to find somewhere for one-to-one interaction.

18. The school identified improvement in assessment of pupils' work as a priority and has invested considerable resource in this area. Working co-operatively with partner schools and the Local Education Authority, the school has put into place an innovative model of assessment which places paramount priority on feeding back to pupils strategies for the improvement of their work, without pressurising them with the imposition of targets. The school's approach to

assessing pupils' work is working well in some areas of the school but is not yet used with sufficient consistency. Not all pupils are sure what to expect and teachers are not all using the approach in ways which genuinely help pupils to improve their work. Reports to parents on the achievements of their children meet statutory requirements and are clear and helpful.

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

The school takes **good** care of its pupils and ensures good welfare, health and safety of the whole school community. It provides **good** support, advice and guidance.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The management of health and safety is good and in the sixth form it is very good; it has significantly improved since the last inspection.
- The school takes good care of its pupils; they are positive about their experience in school and about their relationships with the adults.
- The school has good arrangements for pupils entering school and for those transferring to further or higher education.
- Assessment for learning supports pupils of all abilities well.

## Commentary

19. Pupils' health, safety and welfare are carefully monitored and pupils who are hurt or unwell in school receive very good care from staff qualified in first aid. The school has made very good provision for pupils who have disabilities. Careful risk assessment procedures and the vigilance of staff ensure that pupils are as safe as possible. All the routine checking systems and risk assessments for health and safety are in place; they are carried out thoroughly and regularly and the record keeping is meticulous. The security arrangements including those for Internet use are good.

20. The arrangements for child protection and for students in public care are good. New staff are given clear and helpful induction and all statutory requirements are met.

21. Pupils are supervised very well throughout the day, which makes a significant contribution to their safety as well as encouraging strong relationships between pupils and their teachers. Pupils praise their teachers, and the help and guidance which they are given effectively supports them in their learning. In discussion and on questionnaires most say that they know the staff well, are confident in approaching them, and know that they will be listened to. Teachers know their pupils well and offer good advice, support and guidance in relation to their personal development. They are generally alert to pupils' learning needs and do their best to support them.

22. The school has very good links with the primary schools from which it receives pupils. Primary school pupils benefit from invitations to school productions; a Year 6 project in ICT which carries on into Year 7 and teachers from Year 7 visit the primary school. Some Year 11 pupils visit primary schools to help with physical education. Pupils with special educational needs are identified and have extra visits before they join the school. Parents are pleased with the good procedures for introducing pupils to the school; they say that the transfer to secondary school is carefully managed and works very well. Pupils with special educational needs are well cared for, according to their various needs. The special needs department always provides an unofficial sanctuary for any pupils who find they cannot cope with mainstream classes on either a temporary or a permanent basis, for various reasons.

23. The year tutors and form tutors offer a good range of support to those who need it and good liaison with parents and outside agencies, such as social services, help to resolve any personal difficulties. The on-site school counsellor is used well and the Connexions service works with small groups, as well as providing good career guidance to all older pupils. Pupils and parents receive helpful advice and guidance as they move through the school, for example, when option choices are made. Parents are confident that the school helps and cares for their children very well, and pupils' views are mostly positive. The school is working hard at ensuring that targets are as clear and helpful as they can be. The emphasis on assessment for learning and the intended use of appropriate software, together with greater involvement of parents is very positive. High standards of care make a good contribution to the school's positive ethos.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **good** links with parents, who appreciate the regular and effective communication and the school's welcoming approach. Links with other schools are **good** and with the community are **very good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good links with the community support and extend the work of the school.
- The school fosters good links with parents, who value the wide range of information they receive.
- Links with other schools and colleges especially when pupils move from one phase of their education to the next and upon entry to the school are good.
- The Wallingford School Association provides good support to the school.

## **Commentary**

24. The local community gives very good support to school events and was very involved in the successful application for sports college status. This is expected to significantly enhance sporting and other opportunities; the steering committee is likely to include local people. As a result of these links a member of the local business community has now joined the governing body and another is a volunteer in school. Links with the Merchant Taylors also support the school well and a trust fund helps pupils who need financial assistance, for instance to go on school visits. Selected pupils in Years 10 and 11 also benefit from attending environmental activities with a local trust. The local health centre is also involved in the school's focus on healthy eating. Visits and visitors include a local theatre group, an art workshop run by a printer, art exhibited at Wallingford School of Art and visits to the local museum and the Tate Modern. The Wallingford School Fun Band plays at local events such as the Wallingford Carnival and is appreciated by the community.

25. The school recognises the importance of regular contact with parents as part of its drive to improve standards and works effectively with parents to support pupils' learning. A six-week course, run by the adult education team, aimed at improving parents' understanding of numeracy, is being held on site. Parents receive good quality information and have opportunities to find out about the progress their children are making. The school is planning to update the website so that this becomes more interactive. Written annual reports to parents contain pupils' comments and space for parents to reply and both they and the governors' annual report to parents are good. Parents are always welcome and an open door policy exists. Complaints are dealt with quickly and effectively.

26. Most parents support their children's learning well; they use the pupils' planners well in Years 7 and 8 but less effectively higher up the school.

27. The transition from primary school is managed well. Joint training with feeder primary schools has improved assessment for learning. Pupils also gain valuable work experience in the primary schools. In years 9 and 11 pupils and their parents are very appreciative of the good guidance they have received during these vital changeover periods. The school has links with Abingdon College, which improve vocational opportunities.

28. The Wallingford School Association (WSA) holds social events and these raise funds to support the work of the school; they gave a substantial sum towards the sports college bid. Departments are encouraged to bid for funding and this year WSA has provided funds for outside seating, an electronic drum kit and computer software. Arrangements have been made for a talk about drug abuse at the annual general meeting, led by an outside group called 'Energy and Vision'.

29. The special educational needs department successfully builds links with parents and carers by holding a drop-in session once a fortnight for those who may have concerns they

wish to discuss. Parents and carers are always invited to the annual reviews of statements. Support from outside agencies is strong, including weekly visits from an outreach worker from a local special school. The co-ordinator also liaises closely with primary schools, and gains from attending their informative reviews of pupils who have special needs.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher provides very good leadership and the leadership and management of other key staff are good. Governance is good. Not all statutory requirements are met, but the school provides **good** value for money.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is very good and fundamental to the raising of standards in the school.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.
- Staff development, including support for student teachers, is very good.
- Other key staff show good qualities of leadership and management.
- Governance is good, although the governors apply insufficient rigour in ensuring that statutory responsibilities are met.
- Financial management is good.
- Leadership and management of special educational needs are very good.

### Commentary

30. The headteacher leads the school very well. He has a clear focus on making the school a very good learning institution. This envisages an even better response to the needs of the pupils and students as individuals. It manifests itself, for example, in very good arrangements for staff development which are very well linked to the school improvement plan. Recent school priorities, such as improving assessment, have been very well aligned with staff training. Support for student teachers is also very good. Professional development within the school is supported by seven teaching and learning groups, covering a number of crucial areas such as the motivation of underachievers and learning styles. All teachers belong to one of these groups, each of which reports back to the whole staff and leads a training session in their area.

31. In order to support the generally sharp focus on learning, a significant rearrangement of senior management responsibilities has been undertaken, with effect from September 2004. The aims of this are very clear and have the strong support of the governing body, who have been fully involved in the discussions which led to the rearrangement. Staff at all levels of responsibility understand the new roles of each senior manager, although at the time of the inspection it was too early to say whether the restructuring was having the intended effects. Heads of subject and year tutors fulfil their roles well and play an important part in raising standards in the school.

32. The governing body knows the school well, and offers appropriate levels of challenge and support. It is fully involved in the planning process and took, for example, a fully committed part in the school's recent successful bid for sports college status. Governors are regularly and well briefed on all aspects of the school's work. They have been less successful in ensuring that the school meets all its statutory requirements. Though their minutes show that breaches of statutory requirements are considered regularly, in three important areas – collective worship, time for religious education and citizenship – their challenge to the school has been insufficiently rigorous. They receive good and regular financial information, and their understanding of the school's financial position is good. The school has returned small financial surpluses for the past two years showing prudent management of resources. Best value considerations are well used. Since achievement and the quality of education are good,

the school's average intake and its expenditure per pupil a little below the national average, the value for money provided by the school is good.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,831,738
Total expenditure	3,793,285
Expenditure per pupil	3552.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	87,361
Balance carried forward to the next	38,453

33. The lack of available performance data on individual pupils was a criticism at the time of the last inspection. Good quality data now exists concerning the performance of all pupils and it is readily available to staff who wish to use it. In some subject areas it is used well, but in others less so. The school is aware that too many pupils underachieve, as evidenced by the appointment of an intervention co-ordinator. She has identified a more rigorous and consistent use of data across the school as a key feature in tackling underachievement.

34. The special needs department is very well led and managed by a dedicated co-ordinator who leads a strong team. Job descriptions and responsibilities are clear. Teaching assistants are given suitable training and induction, and are part of the performance management process. The co-ordinator also provides in-service training for the subject staff on how best to provide for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream lessons. A high level of support is given by a knowledgeable and experienced governor, who has a very good understanding of the needs of these pupils and of the department that supports them.

### **The sixth form**

35. The sixth form is very well led and managed, with a clear focus on ensuring that students' achievements are as high as possible. Clear structures and high expectations of students, both in terms of academic work and of behaviour, contribute to a very supportive culture which enables students to do well. The head of the sixth form and her team are aware of the strengths of the sixth form and what actions are needed, both to maintain the current strengths and to secure improvements. Sixth form finances are well managed and there is an appropriate balance between the income and expenditure of the main school and the sixth form. As such, the sixth form is well set to continue to improve.



## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS and COURSES**

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

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

##### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Standards rise as pupils progress through the school, from average in Years 7 to 9, to above average in Years 10 and 11, to well above average in the sixth form.
- Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge
- Teachers' strong commitment to teaching literature raises standards of reading.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to enhance learning and teaching.
- Leadership and management are good.

##### **Commentary**

36. Attainment on entry into Year 7 is average. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 have fluctuated over the past few years, but analysis of trends over time shows them to be average. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that students make satisfactory progress through Years 7 to 9. GCSE results in 2004 for English and English literature were above average. Girls do better than boys in national tests. Overall, standards in reading, speaking and listening are above average. There is insufficient explicit teaching of writing and the quality and presentation of written work is sometimes unsatisfactory.

37. Teaching is good overall. In the best lessons, teachers ensure the pace is brisk through setting time limits for tasks and making the success criteria explicit. Students behave well in English lessons and show positive attitudes to learning. Teachers use praise to encourage and motivate. Relationships are good, being characterised by high levels of respect. For example in one Year 10 lesson, pupils listened very carefully to each other's speeches and offered detailed points on strengths and areas for development. Pupils valued such opportunities to reflect on the quality of their own and others' work. Teachers' planning is effective, but scope exists for improvement in the sharing of explicit learning objectives with pupils at the start of lessons. Pupils make good progress over time. Teachers' marking is supportive but it is not always made clear to pupils what they need to do to achieve a higher level or grade.

38. Teachers are extremely knowledgeable, showing real passion for English. Teachers are committed to high quality teaching of literature. As a consequence, pupils are encouraged to read widely and to make good use of the library. Schemes like the Carnegie shadowing and the very good library provision help foster a love of books and contribute to higher standards in reading overall. By the end of Year 11 many pupils have been so enthused by teachers, they embark on A-level courses in English literature with great confidence.

39. English teaching groups are of mixed ability from Years 7 to 11. Teaching is most successful when the work is fully adapted to ensure a high level of challenge for pupils of all abilities. Gifted and talented pupils are, however, not being stretched to reach their full potential. In contrast, pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers or teaching assistants. There is scope for pupils to be given more opportunities to develop independent working skills and use their initiative. In the best lessons, teachers employ active approaches to learning and teaching, such as the use of

drama or group presentations of scenes pupils write themselves. Teachers need to organise group work more effectively, with greater focus on outcomes, smaller sizes and gender mixing. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, enjoy and achieve more in those lessons where they are actively involved in the learning.

40. A few examples were seen of ICT being used to enhance the teaching of English. These include the provision of revision materials to support the study of poems from other cultures for GCSE on the Oxfordshire Community Network and the use teachers are beginning to make of the department's new interactive whiteboard. Nevertheless, the low level of use of ICT, which was reported in the previous inspection, is still an issue. Teachers' access to appropriate hardware and software is too limited. Pupils word-process their work using home computers or those in the library. Some English rooms are without TV/audio equipment or overhead projectors. The statutory ICT requirements in the National Curriculum are not fully met, as provision, training needs and planning are insufficiently addressed.

41. The department is well led and managed. Leadership is principled and clear direction is given. For example, the department has already identified the need to focus on and moderate standards in Years 7 to 9, in order to raise attainment. Teachers work hard and are very professional. The considerable depth of experience and strong work ethic in the team mean that high standards of behaviour and positive attitudes in English lessons are maintained. Improvements since the last inspection include revisions to the schemes of work, assessment for learning and improved self-evaluation processes. Best practice from within the department, across the school and from national initiatives such as the Key Stage 3 Strategy, is insufficiently shared.

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

42. Literacy levels overall are above average. A working group of key staff is focusing on this area of the school's work. Some students with below expected levels in literacy are taught using the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Teachers' use of literacy progress units helps them catch up. Students speak clearly and confidently in most situations using standard English well. Listening skills are above average. In physical education, mathematics and Science, students listened attentively to the teacher or to other students, asking questions to seek clarification. In music, art and modern foreign languages, teachers used music or audio tapes very successfully to develop listening. Library provision is good. Most students read well enough to access the secondary curriculum. However, teachers neither encourage reading with expression enough, nor provide more sustained pieces, particularly of non fiction. In English students are being taught a wide range of fiction. Most teachers teach key words but do not always mark spelling or insist on high levels of presentation. Teachers in history and modern foreign languages are using a range of strategies successfully to support both reading and writing.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

Provision in French is **good**.

All pupils study French from Year 7 and German from Year 8. The number of pupils taking both languages has significantly increased since 2004. In 2003 and 2004 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 included both languages. Pupils study French and German until the end of Year 9, when they have a choice of continuing to study either language or both. French was inspected in full. German was sampled.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Overall teaching is good, and achievement is good as a result
- Pupils' attitudes towards their work are very good, as are relationships between pupils and staff.
- Staff are well qualified and motivated, and have high expectations for their pupils.
- Attainment is very good in Years 10 and 11, with the majority of pupils obtaining higher grades at GCSE.
- Good leadership ensures that a collaborative team constantly strives to improve standards.
- The use of ICT for language learning is too limited.
- Many higher attaining pupils are not given challenging extension work.

## **Commentary**

43. The 2003 GCSE examinations, results in French were well above the national average. The proportion of boys obtaining grades A\*-C was smaller than that of the girls but it is still above the national average. Pupils achieve higher grades in French compared to many other subjects in the school. Boys' performance now equals that of girls.

44. On entry, French is new to the majority of pupils. In 2003, modern foreign language teachers assessed pupils' attainment as above average by the end of Year 9. These assessments included French and German and showed the nationally expected proportion of pupils reaching higher levels. From lessons and work seen at the end of Year 9, standards overall are above the national average and pupils' achievement is good. In Years 7 to 9 pupils respond very well to a majority of lessons which are delivered at a brisk pace and where French is used throughout the lesson. In those lessons pupils speak confidently in short but accurate phrases. In lessons where French is not used consistently, pupils are hesitant and tend to answer in English. Key words are displayed in all classrooms, with the result that reading skills are very well developed. This is also true for listening. A Year 7 class is able to understand information about birthdays while listening to a tape played at normal speed and without stopping. Pupils particularly enjoy pair and group work, which forms part of most lessons. However, some high attainers are not sufficiently challenged. Boys achieve as well as girls. Pupils with special educational needs and those from ethnic minorities also achieve well.

45. In Years 10 and 11, standards in French are well above the national average. Achievement in the four skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing is good. Listening and reading remain strengths. In oral work, some pupils lack confidence, especially when speaking at length. They are too reliant on prepared texts. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils are set individual targets with the skilful help of an assistant. A magical moment occurs when their enthusiasm leads them to check whether their partners have achieved their goal.

46. Teaching and learning are strengths of the department. Teaching is good overall with all lessons observed judged good or better. In the best lessons, teachers speak in the foreign language consistently and expect pupils to respond in the same. The majority of lessons observed are teacher directed and highly dependent on textbooks. Challenging behaviour by a small minority of pupils disrupts teaching and prevents others from achieving their goals. Little work is specifically adapted for pupils with special educational needs or higher attainers, except for a few lessons in Year 10. Resources are satisfactory. Pupils do not have access to ICT equipment within the department, nor a well-stocked library to provide opportunities for independent research or extension work. Resources for languages in the school library are also too limited at present. Provision of extra-curricular activities is good. There is an annual trip to Boulogne with Year 7 and a four-day residential trip to Dieppe for 60 Year 8 pupils

47. Both leadership and management are good. A comprehensive scheme of work has been produced, incorporating the regular use of ICT and existing software packages. However, because of the tight booking system, opportunities for the large number of pupils are too infrequent. The department has one overall team leader with curriculum co-ordinators for French and German. There is a part-time French language assistant who focuses mainly on helping GCSE, AS and A level candidates.

## German

48. All pupils study German from Year 8 onward. German is again being studied in the 6<sup>th</sup> form and GCSE examination results show a marked increase in pupils obtaining high grades in 2004, with boys achieving as well as girls. The scheme of work in German for all years is weaker than that for French and does not incorporate ICT for language learning. There is a part-time German language assistant who concentrates on preparing pupils for GCSE oral examinations. All Year 8 pupils have German pen friends and there are exchange trips to various destinations in Germany.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- All groups of pupils make very good progress by the end of Year 9.
- There is excellent development of the mathematics curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is underdeveloped.
- There is good leadership and management.
- There is insufficient use of ICT by pupils to enrich their learning of mathematics.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.

### Commentary

49. In 2003, results for pupils at the end of Year 9 in national tests were well above average with the large majority achieving Level 5 or above and more than a third of pupils achieving Level 7 or above. Performance in GCSE in 2003 at the end of Year 11 was above average, with over half of those entering obtaining grades A\* - C and only a very small number not obtaining a grade. Standards seen in the school and provisional 2004 results confirm that standards are rising. This represents very good achievement from entry in year 7 to the end of year 9. The progress that pupils make from Year 9 to Year 11 is satisfactory. Standards are higher than at the time of the previous inspection and indicate good improvement. The most able do not make the same rate of progress in Years 10 and 11 as they do in Years 7 to 9, although evidence from provisional 2004 results indicate that the proportion of A\* grades at GCSE has increased significantly. Targeted teaching of small groups of pupils in Year 7 who enter the school with below average attainment ensures that by the end of Year 9 a considerably lower proportion of pupils are below average attainment than is recorded nationally.

50. Teaching and learning are good overall. All but a small proportion of teaching is good or better and there is some outstanding teaching. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. In excellent lessons, teachers use probing questioning to develop pupils' mathematical thinking, plan engaging and challenging activities and create a rich mathematical learning environment. Pupils generally work very well together and there is an excellent working atmosphere in most classes, with pupils fully engaged in their work. The behaviour of a few pupils impedes the learning of a small number of Years 9, 10 and 11 pupils. Teachers work very hard and are readily available to support pupils who need extra help outside of the lessons, particularly during a weekly mathematics clinic available to all pupils. They have a very good command of the subject and target their teaching to ensure that pupils make good progress. This is most notable in Years 7, 8 and 9, where the impact of the national strategy for

mathematics has resulted in changes to teaching approaches, a very good scheme of work and good use of assessment to plan for pupils' learning, resulting in very good teaching. In Years 10 and 11, schemes of work are not sufficiently developed. This results in the less rapid progress of these pupils, because some teaching is planned by what is in the textbook rather than on what pupils need to learn. This particularly impedes the progress of the most able. Several teachers use ICT very effectively to teach aspects of mathematics. Some excellent examples were seen, including the excellent use of a probability game during the plenary of a Year 8 lesson and graph plotting software in a Year 11 lesson. However, the potential for the use of ICT by pupils to support their learning is very underdeveloped. 51. Purposeful homework is set, which consolidates understanding. Marking is inconsistent across the department and not always helpful in supporting pupils' learning. In Years 7-9 the use of self-assessment prior to and at the end of each module gives pupils and their teachers a good idea of the progress they have made during the unit.

52. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has a very clear vision as to what needs to be done and this vision is clearly focused on raising standards. She is a very good teacher and an excellent role model to both her colleagues and the pupils. Despite having to overcome considerable staffing difficulties throughout her time in the post, standards have risen significantly in Years 7 to 9. The management of the introduction and embedding of the national strategy into the department has been exemplary. The 'open door' policy within the department facilitates frequent informal monitoring of teaching by the head of department. Good procedures are in place to ensure that the department functions to the optimum level that staffing difficulties will allow. New teachers to the school are very well supported. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

53. Pupils' numeracy skills are good. They demonstrated a high degree of competence in applying their mathematical ability in all subjects where mathematics was seen used. They do particularly well in interpreting a variety of different graphical representations and investigating hypotheses in geography, working out percentage success rate in P.E. and estimating and measuring in design and technology. In ICT pupils successfully set parameters on grids and work out calculations accurately.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good and so pupils learn well.
- Good leadership and management provide clear direction for raising standards.
- Accommodation is very good.
- The use of ICT to support learning in experimental science is underdeveloped.
- The needs of gifted and talented pupils are not always addressed.

### **Commentary**

54. The 2003 national test results for Year 9 were above the national average and above those for similar schools, based upon standards on entry to Year 7. Results have been above average since the last inspection and have risen in line with the national improvement. The

results for the 2004 tests were similar. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations at the end of year 11 were just above average and were similar in 2004.

55. The standard of work seen in Years 7 to 11 was above average. High attaining pupils in Year 9 are able to use word equations to describe chemical reactions, describe the circulatory system and use equations to calculate physical quantities. They demonstrate good investigative skills and can work independently. In Year 11, high attaining pupils know how the electron arrangements in atoms affect the chemical properties of different groups of elements and low attainers understand the energy changes that take place in many common devices.

56. Pupils achieve well in years 7 to 11. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy enables them to use a wide variety of effective teaching methods that result in pupils making good progress in Years 7 to 9. The progress is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Both high and low attainers do well in all years and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in all years but a small number of gifted and talented pupils do not always achieve as well as they could.

57. The quality of teaching is good and enables pupils to learn well. All the teaching seen in Years 7 to 9 was good. In Years 10 and 11 the teaching is good overall. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers set high expectations and plan their lessons well to ensure that pupils achieve the learning outcomes set. The teaching is supported by good classroom management that ensures pupils are on task and making full use of the lesson time. However, in some lessons the distracting behaviour of a small number of pupils adversely affects the learning of others. In a few lessons the work set is not challenging enough to meet the needs of the most gifted and talented pupils. Very good and excellent teaching was characterised by the setting of very challenging learning objectives for the pupils. These matched pupils' full capabilities and employed a variety of methods that both stimulated and challenged them to find out as much as they could for themselves. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on pressure, pupils were encouraged to develop the concept of pressure through life examples, develop a mathematical formula for pressure and then use the formula to explain the principle of hydraulic systems. The step-by-step structure of the lesson involved different activities that were well timed and managed and this resulted in pupils achieving very well. Pupils are given targets for improvement and good examples were seen of pupils' self-evaluation being used in Years 7 and 8. Pupils' levels of literacy and numeracy support their progress in science well. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to use ICT to support their learning in experimental science.

58. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department is a good role model and has a clear vision for raising standards. This vision is shared by a committed team of effective teachers, laboratory technicians and support staff. The effectiveness of the department is evaluated well and the results are used to plan for improvements. The day-to-day management of the department is good and staff are clear about their roles. The accommodation provided is very good and pupils benefit from good levels of books and equipment

### **Example of outstanding practice**

**This was a Year 7 mixed ability group lesson designed to enable all pupils to use the mnemonics MRS GREN or MRS NERG to describe all living things.**

The lesson started with an activity in which all pupils had to classify and record objects around the room as living or non-living. This activity was timed and expectations of working swiftly but accurately were soon established by

the enthusiastic approach of the teacher, who used background music to a popular TV series to quicken the pace. Pupils were then selected to read back their classifications and give reasons for their choice. Pupils were switched on by this starter and couldn't wait for the main activity. The teacher then explained what MRS GREN/MRS NERG stood for and information sheets were given to pupils who needed them. (Movement, Respiration, Sensitivity, Growth, Reproduction, Excretion, Nutrition. The meanings of these were also discussed with pupils drawing on their life experiences) In order to enable pupils to learn the mnemonics they had a choice of activities. Working in pairs they had a choice of illustrating the mnemonic with drawings, a poem or a song. The pupils were delighted with the prospect of creativity and most opted for composing a song. The brisk pace of activity was maintained and the pupils spurred on by the enthusiasm of the teacher. Performance time came and the pupils revealed an amazing range of songs and poems that not only ensured that they had remembered all the key words but that they knew most of their meanings. A well-designed homework (two sheets, one for the highest attainers) presented challenge to all pupils in applying their newly acquired concepts.



## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for ICT has improved from the satisfactory level at the last inspection
- The very good quality of teaching is promoting good achievement
- The team leader is managing staffing and curriculum changes well
- There is strong commitment to develop and improve ICT within the school
- Pupils enhance their learning opportunities effectively through improved resources and increased access to them.
- There are inconsistencies in providing challenge for talented pupils
- ICT is not used to a sufficient extent in all subject areas.

### Commentary

59. Standards are rising year on year and work seen during the inspection indicates that these high standards are being maintained. By the end of Year 9 pupils are achieving well and this represents good progress over time. For pupils in Years 9 and 10 new courses have been introduced in response to their needs and the department is careful to monitor the progress of individual pupils. This ensures that all pupils, regardless of attainment on entry, ethnicity or special educational needs, are making good progress. Higher attaining pupils apply their knowledge and skills well to produce good quality individual project work. Achievement and progress in all years is good.

60. Pupils are positive about ICT throughout the school. Behaviour is generally good and pupils work well together. They help each other and discuss their work and how they might make changes. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their ICT skills. They make good use of facilities, both at lunch times and in after-school clubs. The team leader has made a detailed data analysis of subject performance, leading to the provision of a computer club for girls and new examination courses offered in Year 10, addressing pupils' needs effectively.

61. Teaching and learning are very good. The quality of teaching and learning in all lessons seen was at least satisfactory, and often very good or excellent across all years. This reflects teachers' good subject knowledge, planning and presentation skills. Projectors are used effectively for whole class teaching and the use of interactive whiteboards is giving pace to whole class teaching strategies. Good use is made of e-mail, by both staff and pupils, to assist in homework assignments. The use of ICT is beginning to play a major part in the motivation and inclusion of all pupils. Although assessment for learning is at an early stage of development, the department is consistently applying the school policy, so that individual pupils receive and act upon feedback. Challenge for those who find the work easy is provided, but inconsistently.

62. The department is very well led by an enthusiastic and dedicated teacher. She sets a very good example in lesson preparation and pupil management. As a team leader she has a clear vision about future developments and the need to maintain and develop high standards. This sense of direction for the development of the subject is based upon effective use of assessment information. A range of well organised learning resources enriches the students' learning environment. The ease of access for pupils to use ICT and their own competence allows pupils to make their own decisions on whether to use ICT for a particular task.

63. Very good progress has been made since the last report. The increased investment in equipment, staffing and curriculum time has taken the school from a low base to very good provision. Technical staff are experienced and effective in meeting technical demands of the department. The e-learning system provides staff and pupils with freely available resources. Accommodation is well designed with access to multimedia projectors and there is a good range of specialist software. The teaching of practical work benefits from these resources. The subject has excellent capacity for further improvement.

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

64. Provision has now improved and overall the use of ICT in other subjects is satisfactory. Pupils' competence is very good. Some subject areas are not providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT to assist their learning. However, there are examples of good practice in design and technology and in religious education. Teachers are able to teach in a positive learning environment, using the intranet with focused curriculum material to meet learning intentions. The increase in resources means that students are beginning to take advantage of the e-learning environment to complete homework tasks. Pupils are keen to make progress using computers at lunchtimes and after-school clubs.

65. ICT lessons ensure that pupils are well prepared to apply their knowledge and understanding of computer programmes. Particularly effective use is made of the Internet for personal research and independent learning

## **HUMANITIES**

### **GEOGRAPHY**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Teaching is good overall, in this team of experienced, well-qualified teachers.
- Pupils' attitudes are good, many show interest and enthusiasm, and most work hard.
- Visual stimulus resources and text-book supply are good, but there is insufficient access to and use of ICT.
- Display in geography classrooms and adjoining corridor enhances the good accommodation.

#### **Commentary**

66. Standards are improving, as shown by the National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9. In 2003 these were above the national average, and similar in 2004, although with a much increased ratio of higher levels. The GCSE results in 2003 for geography were above the national average, with the proportion with the top grades well above the national average. A decline in A\*-C grades in 2004 is explained by the variability between years of pupils choosing to study geography. Boys' and girls' test and examination results vary over time, but with no significant difference overall.

67. Standards of work seen are in line with national expectations in Years 7 to 9, and better in Years 10 and 11. Pupils enter the school with a range of previous experiences and geographical skills, knowledge and understanding. They are taught in mixed ability forms in

years 7 and 8, and attainment varies with teacher, topic, and the attitudes of pupils as well as their prior attainment. In some classes work and expectations are insufficiently matched to pupils' ability and aptitude. Higher attaining pupils are rarely stretched enough to produce the standards they are capable of, although their general knowledge and discussion skills aid their achievement in geography. Exciting visual stimuli, such as the photographs and video on the Kobe earthquake in a Year 8 lesson, led to awe and wonder at the power of nature and an understanding of the effect on people in other countries and cultures. Achievement improves in Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well where the very good teaching assistants are present to help and support them. Year 9 pupils are grouped by ability, and teacher assistants are well used, such as in the low attainment class drawing graphs of survey results, where two thirds had special educational needs. Literacy skills are good, many pupils write well and read with understanding, and discussion skills increase. Graphical skills are good and they are practised consistently in lessons.

68. Year 10 and 11 pupils are grouped in mixed ability classes this year. Pupils' achievement varies with how well teachers manage this, and depends on whether they challenge the more able while supporting the low attaining pupils. Achievement is better where there is a variety of engaging learning activities and good quality resources. One year 10 class achieved highly, learning about slums in Nairobi by observing photographs and discussing in groups the settlement features, factors and problems. They developed geographical skills while improving their knowledge and understanding of places and themes. Another year 10 class achieved less well by copying notes about the theoretical settlement hierarchy from their textbook, combined with teacher talk and overhead projector transparencies which were difficult to see. One Year 11 class achieved well developing good knowledge about the long profile of rivers by graphs, pictures, text and specific examples, with different worksheets for those aiming for higher or foundation tier GCSE. Another Year 11 class were drawing posters of flooding in Bangladesh, which did not stretch the higher attaining pupils, although revising work done. This inconsistency between the experiences of pupils in the same year, aiming for the same examination, did not give equal opportunities for all to achieve their potential.

69. Teaching and learning is good overall but inconsistent, with some excellent features but also practices which hinder the achievement of pupils in mixed ability classes. Where teachers structure their lessons well, with a variety of pupil-centred learning activities, and using vivid visual stimuli and quality resources, learning is very good. Then pupils are keen to learn, show interest and enthusiasm, and work hard. Relationships are good between teachers and pupils, and most pupils work well together, but where work is less exciting or demanding some pupils behave less well and disrupt others. Most teachers handle class discussion well, although sometimes teacher talk dominates. Although teachers know the personalities of their pupils well, their prior attainment and potential are not exploited to the full in many lessons. The analysis of strengths and areas for development on specific pieces of work, and in annual review, are good, but marking of pupils' books is inconsistent, and does little to raise achievement.

70. Leadership and management of geography are good. The new curriculum co-ordinator has enthusiasm, a strong sense of direction and a focus on pupil achievement, building on the good work of the previous head of department. It is acknowledged that greater provision and use of ICT is needed in geography, an issue in the last inspection. He recognises that schemes of work are minimal, and need extension to enable more detailed planning of the structure of lessons. Opportunities for citizenship, the spiritual and cultural dimension of geography and work-related learning need to be identified. The number of pupils opting to study geography for GCSE has declined, and is an issue to be addressed, along with raising

pupils' awareness of how to improve their work. Since the last inspection, standards, resources and teaching have risen and overall improvement is good.

## **HISTORY**

Provision in history is **satisfactory**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good marking and assessment procedures mean that pupils know how to improve their work.
- Good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 enable pupils to achieve well.
- Insufficient enrichment activities in Years 7 to 9 limit the curriculum.
- Provision of a range of learning activities for pupils with different levels of attainment is inconsistent.

### **Commentary**

71. By the end of Year 9 standards are average, showing satisfactory achievement from entry to the school in Year 7. Pupils' historical knowledge and understanding increases over these years, underpinned by strong writing and oral skills that mean that they are good at explaining what they know. For example, Year 7 pupils were able to identify the strengths of a motte and bailey castle and link these to the local castle in the town. Pupils with special educational needs are known to their teachers and progress as well as others in the class when they are given adequate support. However, in many lessons all pupils were taught from the same materials at the same pace, and so were not able to achieve their full potential. Whilst literacy is well developed through reading and writing, opportunities to promote numeracy are not systematically planned into lessons.

72. In 2003 GCSE results were above the national average for grades A\*-C and in line with the average for grades A\* to G. Results were in line with results for other subjects in the school. In 2004 the proportion gaining A\* grades increased. Every year, three or four pupils enter for the Certificate of Achievement in place of the GCSE and all have gained a distinction in recent years. Work seen during the inspection is of an above average standard overall, showing good achievement. The very good standard of writing from higher attaining pupils, coupled with their good knowledge and understanding of historical facts and issues mean that they can analyse and synthesise information well and present their conclusions in a logical manner. The limited quantity and quality of the work of lower attaining pupils shows a lack of interest and lack of understanding of examination requirements.

73. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, good in Years 10 and 11, where there is more drive and purpose behind pupils' work. The better lessons are well managed and provide an interesting learning experience that encourages pupils to think for themselves. For example, in a Year 11 lesson about the collapse of international peace in the 1930s, pupils worked together successfully in pairs, compiling a briefing letter to the British government about Hitler's attacks on the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. However, teaching styles in Years 7 to 9 are often unvaried and much of the lesson planning does not give consideration to what the pupils are expected to learn and how they will best achieve this. Assessment is satisfactory with clear marking in line with the school policy, and skilled evaluation of learning in lessons through questioning. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, but teachers do not make the most of opportunities to enrich this contribution.

74. Satisfactory leadership and management have ensured that all the required administrative systems are in place. However, there is no informed use of assessment data to evaluate progress, and schemes of work are not well enough developed to give adequate guidance on teaching strategies and cross-curricular themes. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. ICT use has been improved, but is still limited by inadequate access to facilities.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory** across the school because too little time is allowed for pupils aged 14 to 16 and in the sixth form. Provision for those pupils who choose to study religious education is very good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Statutory requirements are not being met in years 10 and 11 for the majority of pupils.
- There has been limited progress on this since the last inspection.
- Provision by specialist teachers in religious education is very good.
- Overall the quality of the teaching is very good and is characterised by strong subject expertise.
- Pupils in GCSE option groups achieve well.
- The department makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### Commentary

75. At the end of year 9, attainment is above average. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of aspects of world religions such as Christianity and Islam. Pupils can reason and express themselves well about a range of topics including the problem of suffering and the teachings of religious leaders. Their research skills are good and pupils use ICT with confidence. The pupils have very good reasoning skills. There is no significant difference between the attainment boys and girls. The achievement of the pupils is good. Across all years, pupils with special educational needs and the more able pupils also achieve well through the help provided for them by the class teachers and teaching assistants.

76. In year 2003 standards were above average. At the end of year 11, attainment in the GCSE option group in year 2004 was well above average. Over two thirds of those entering gained the higher grades A\* to C. All those entering gained a grade A\*-G. Several pupils got better grades than predicted. For the pupils in the GCSE option group, the standards seen during the inspection were above average. Pupils can talk and write with confidence about a range of issues within Judaism and Christianity. These include topics on holy books and various rites of passage such as marriage. Pupils are also knowledgeable about a range of moral and social issues such as peace and justice. The pupils have strong research and reasoning skills. The standards in the core religious education groups are below average, due to the very limited amount of time they have for study across the two years. In the work that they actually do, the standards are above average. The achievement of all pupils is good. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

77. Teaching is very good overall. Some teaching is excellent and some is satisfactory. All lessons are well prepared and an imaginative range of activities is used to put across the

subject matter. Homework is set and a well developed assessment system is in place. ICT is used well in many of the lessons. Where the teaching is excellent, the lessons are characterised by strong content drawn from world religions, the pace is fast and the lessons are demanding. Consequently the best use is made of the time and the learning is strong. Where teaching is satisfactory, the pace is slower and not all pupils are engaged in their work. In teaching as a whole, work is not always sufficiently tailored to the range of abilities in the class. The teaching makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

78. Leadership and management are good. The department has an extensive range of documentation. Staffing is very good. Accommodation and resources are very good. Statutory requirements are not being met in years 10 and 11 for the pupils not in the option groups. There has been unsatisfactory progress on this since the last inspection.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Teaching and learning in the department are good.
- The new head of department is a very good practitioner and leads the team by example.
- There is good teamwork in the department and technicians support learning and teaching well.
- Results in GCSE resistant materials have been well below average for a number of years and students are underperforming in graphics.
- Results in food technology and in textiles are generally well above average.

#### **Commentary**

79. Pupils enter the school often with limited capability in design and technology. They make good progress and by Year 9 standards are above average. The teacher assessments for 2004 that aggregate performance across the materials areas, show levels of attainment that are above national averages. The development of practical skills is given good emphasis in the schemes of work, so by Year 9, pupils work capably with a good range of materials and processes. The students' design folders do not consistently offer a good record of their progress through the design process and they are often poorly organised. The department is reviewing and revising the schemes of work to rationalise the delivery of the design process over Years 7 to 9.

80. Aggregated results at GCSE in design technology have been above average over several years. Results in food technology and textiles have been well above average. Results in resistant materials have been below average largely reflecting the lower attaining profile of the students who have traditionally opted for this subject. Results in graphics have been lower than national averages in recent years and the progress made by pupils has been below that made by students in the other subjects. One reason for the insufficient progress in graphics has been a historical weakness in sketching and in other graphical skills. In order to improve performance the head of department intends to develop schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 that are specifically designed to improve graphical skills.

81. Teaching is good and is delivered by an experienced team who work very well together. The appointment of the head of department has strengthened the team. The changes he has begun are designed to build on existing practice in teaching and learning and to considerably improve teaching and learning across the materials areas, particularly resistant materials and graphics. Strong features of the better teaching are careful structuring of lessons to maintain interest through variety of activity, clear objectives for learning and tight time targets which give lessons pace and purpose. Teachers have generally very good subject knowledge and this is evident in their planning and in the feedback they give to pupils. Assessment is being improved and existing good practice in the setting of individual targets in Years 10 and 11 is being applied to all materials areas.

82. There is very good leadership in the department. It is building on the strengths of good existing team work. In a short space of time the head of department has introduced a series of measures to improve standards further though development planning is still weak.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **ART AND DESIGN**

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

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

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Examination results are consistently above the national average, representing good achievement.

#### **Commentary**

83. The standard of pupils' work is very good. Teacher assessment in Year 9 indicates that the large majority of pupils attain at levels above the national average, which is a reflection on the very high quality of teaching and learning. Attainment in GCSE examinations has risen steadily since the previous inspection. In 2003, 74 per cent of 16 year olds gained A\*-C grades, significantly above the national average. All pupils achieved A\*-G grades. Unconfirmed results for 2004 indicate that 75 per cent of pupils gained A\*-C grades with all those entering gaining A\*-G grades.

84. Pupils enter the school with an average knowledge of art. They make very good gains, rapidly developing an understanding of colour, tone and shade. They use a range of media to express their individual personalities, researching images and photos to add to their surrealistic collages. In Year 8, symmetry and geometry enhance pupils' conventional and distorted self portraits in the styles of Braque or Picasso. In Year 9, they broaden their knowledge of artistic styles, for example, they examine Andy Warhol images using their ideas and his style to create pop art posters in both 2- and 3-dimensional designs.

85. In Years 10 and 11 pupils extend their earlier learning with very good and sometimes excellent results. They express views on the environment, depicting for example, conflict, pollution or health. Their carefully annotated sketch books outline initial thoughts and designs, and it is possible to track the development of their chosen theme from conception to creation. For example, following a visit by Year 11 to a local museum, pupils were inspired by their

photographs and sketches to create ethnic artwork, such as a superb wood carving of an African mask.

86. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In the nine lessons observed, three were excellent. Well balanced sessions are challenging for all ability levels. Where relevant, lower achieving pupils are provided with writing frames, and teachers and assistants provide effective individual support during practical sessions. Consequently, all pupils make very good gains during lessons. Relationships are very good and the pupils respond very well to high expectations of good behaviour. In all years, pupils are encouraged to think and express their thoughts independently, resulting in a very wide range of innovative work. The good use of resources and off-site visits inspire pupils' originality. Good cross curricular links are made with other subjects such as science, history, geography and PSHE. Literacy and numeracy skills are well promoted through recording and calculating exercises. However, although teachers occasionally use laptops, digital cameras and scanners, they miss opportunities to use computers and the Internet to enhance their art. Homework is used very effectively, and class groups evaluate their own and others' efforts, while identifying areas for development. This consolidates learning and encourages pupils to improve their standards.

87. Although the school has been unable to recruit a subject leader, the temporary subject leader ensures that supply and part-time staff are well informed of the curriculum and assessment requirements. Teaching and learning are monitored by a line manager. However, he is a non-artist and therefore finds it difficult to monitor the curriculum. The instability of this arrangement is an area for the school to address. Assessment procedures follow the whole school policy and are implemented very well by individual teachers. The current scheme of work and overview of art and design are satisfactory overall. Staff expertise is very good. The accommodation and resources are very good and have significantly improved since the last inspection. The school now has a designated art block, with the addition of a well equipped pottery room and a photographic dark room. All classrooms are well equipped with interactive whiteboards, and there is a new computer suite almost ready for use.

88. Improvement since the last inspection is good overall. Whilst the use of computers to support art has improved, this is underdeveloped and continues to be an issue.

## **DRAMA**

The teaching of drama was sampled. Provision in drama is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good, since pupils achieve well and show positive attitudes.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge.
- The accommodation is not always suitable.

### **Commentary**

89. Teachers are enthusiastic and teaching is good. Students respond very well to the subject. This is evidenced by the high numbers opting to take drama at GCSE level, and theatre studies the sixth form. Students collaborate well with each other to produce imaginative and lively improvisations.

90. There is a lack of suitable accommodation beyond the drama studio. Timetabling constraints mean that some drama lessons are taught in classrooms, which are not suitable. In



those lessons, learning is invariably affected by lack of space and extraneous noise. Lessons taught in the drama studio are more successful.

## **MUSIC**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The teachers are good musicians and use their skills effectively to illustrate and demonstrate.
- ICT is well used in Years 10 and 11 and resources are well used to give interest and variety to the learning in all years.
- Marking of pupils' work is inadequate and does not inform them enough about how well they are doing and how they can improve.
- Pupils' attitudes in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
- The behaviour of a small number of pupils in lower attaining sets affects the quality of learning in a few lessons.

### **Commentary**

91. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well in relation to their prior musical experience. They continue to do well in Years 10 and 11, which is particularly impressive as many have not had the benefit of individual instrumental lessons. Generally, boys and girls achieve equally well. Talented pupils do well; they are given many opportunities to work at a higher level particularly in extra-curricular activities where standards are high. Pupils with special needs also make good progress. The number of pupils entered for GCSE music in 2004 was too small for valid comparisons with national statistics. However, two thirds of the pupils gained grades A\*-C and over half achieved A or B grades. In work seen standards of attainment in Years 10 and 11 were above average. Pupils perform confidently and fluently, with a good sense of style and idiom. In their listening work they show good understanding of notation when identifying rhythms and notes, but show less knowledge of compositional devices and features of style relating to musical history. Their compositions show a good feeling for the idioms of popular music. For example a Year 11 composition for jazz sextet demonstrated a very sophisticated use of syncopation. Attainment in Years 7 to 9 is above average. Pupils perform well on keyboards; they control them well, show good knowledge of chords, and use fingering systems effectively. They have a good knowledge of notation, particularly rhythm, but rely too much on letter names for pitch. Singing standards are good; pupils hold independent parts and sing well in tune. Their compositions show good ideas, well chosen timbres and effective use of compositional devices.

92. Teaching and learning are good in all year groups. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well in demonstration and illustration. They have high expectations and set challenging work. Resources are well used to give variety to the learning, maintaining pupils' interest and concentration. Although ICT is well used in Years 10 and 11, there is insufficient use in Years 7 to 9. Singing is used effectively to improve performing and listening skills. In Years 7 to 9, the quality of learning is occasionally affected by the unsatisfactory behaviour of a few pupils in the lower attaining sets. However, behaviour is generally good and is very good in Years 10 and 11. Assessment is systematic at the end of each unit of work but marking does not follow school policy. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are

insufficiently informed as to how well they are doing or how they can improve. Pupils like the subject and collaborate well, showing good relationships. Those with special educational needs are fully integrated into all activities, with work well matched to their needs and a good level of individual attention.

93. The leadership of the department is good; this secures the subject a high profile within the school and enthuses the pupils. Management is satisfactory. Curriculum planning is lacking in detail and structure although all National Curriculum areas are covered. Some innovative curriculum planning has taken place, such as the provision of an AS level music technology course for Year 11 pupils. The accommodation for music is very good. Resources are good overall but lacking in sufficient computers for large groups in Years 7 to 9. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Attainment in Years 7 to 9 has improved and the use of ICT in Years 10 and 11 has improved significantly.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is good across the department.
- All staff have high expectations of behaviour, dress and conduct.
- The department consists of a strong team of specialists.
- National curriculum requirements are insufficiently well understood by pupils
- Lesson planning does not give pupils enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Strategies need to be developed to challenge the more able pupils.

### **Commentary**

94. Standards across the school are above average. Standards in GCSE are above the national average, but few pupils achieve the top grades. Recruitment to the course is heavily in favour of boys, who attain better than girls. Standards as assessed at the end of year 9 are well above the national average for level 5 and beyond. A new assessment procedure has been introduced, in which pupils use self-assessment for each sport. The department needs to ensure that national curriculum levels are understood by all pupils so that they can identify where they are and what they need to do to achieve a higher level. Standards seen during the inspection in years 9 and 11 are satisfactory, but by the end of the school year will be higher than seen at this stage in the school year.

95. Most pupils achieve well, but the more able need to be challenged more and develop greater independence from their teacher. Opportunities to extend learning are offered in the wide range of well attended extra-curricular activities and competitive teams the school provides. Staff direct pupils to local clubs, where they can enhance and develop skills, and the joint use of the on-site leisure centre aids these school-club links. Outside coaches in fencing and aerobics add expertise to the department. Pupils with SEN achieve in line with other pupils, being well integrated. Pupils enjoy the lessons; participation rates and kit are very good. Teaching and learning are good across the department, but methods are predominately teacher led, with too little adaptation of tasks to support the less able and to challenge the most skilful. All teachers have good classroom management and organisational skills. Teachers have high expectations of dress, conduct and behaviour. Potentially disruptive behaviour from

a few students is skilfully handled so that learning is not interrupted. Pupils learn through progressive, well-planned activities, with good time on task to consolidate their skills. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and students are kept engaged and active. They work together in groups and in pairs, and can organise themselves and drills effectively. Most lessons have clear learning objectives, but these are too infrequently shared with the pupils to make them clear about what they should have achieved by the end of the lesson. Opportunities to reflect on performance and learning are too limited, but when they are provided, pupils show an understanding of strengths and weaknesses, especially in others and this links well with the whole school assessment policy. Warm-up is a feature of all lessons, but does not lay the foundation for GCSE, as links to muscles, joints, and heart rate are often missed in lessons.

96. Leadership of the department is good, being ambitious, reflective and self-critical. A clear development plan, linked closely to the aims of the school and the sports college plans, steers the department towards improvement. The specialist team of teachers, with varied expertise and experience, supported by other members of the teaching staff in extra-curricular activities, are well managed, being clear about their roles and responsibilities, and have access to guidance and support. Monitoring of achievement is well established and changes have been introduced in the form of student self assessment. Schemes of work lack consistency, specific learning objectives and do not include planned learning opportunities for citizenship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils groupings do not sufficiently succeed in ensuring that all pupils, especially at GCSE, maximise their learning opportunities. Accommodation is good, except for GCSE theory where absence of a designated area limits display.

97. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The use of ICT has improved. GCSE courses have been embedded and are growing. Time for Year 10 students has increased to two hours per week, with Year 11 following suit in 2005. The good quality of teaching has been maintained.

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

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

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

- An audit has been carried out in years 7,8 and 9 to determine where subject departments are already making a contribution to citizenship.
- Planning for other aspects of citizenship are in the process of development but not yet in place.
- A scheme of work clearly indicating where the National Curriculum is to be covered has not yet been fully completed.
- Assessment and reporting is yet to be carried out.

### **Commentary**

98. Citizenship is at the early stages of development in the school. It is being co-ordinated in years 7, 8 and 9 where an audit has been done. A similar exercise has yet to be completed in years 10 and 11.

99. Nevertheless, whole year groups of pupils and sometimes all pupils are already engaged in a range of activities that reflect many of the requirements of citizenship. School assemblies for example, cover topics like making decisions, responsibilities, and some assemblies have a strong European dimension. Many events such as Comic Relief and Sports Relief involve the whole school, not only in donating money to charitable causes, but also in helping them understand much about their responsibilities as national and global citizens. Pupils are learning to become informed citizens through studies in English, history and religious education such as in units of work on the criminal justice system, human rights and multi-cultural awareness. Environmental issues are considered in geography as well as aspects of central and local government. The PSHE programme makes a wide ranging input to citizenship. All pupils in year 10 are involved in debates on current affairs and much of the work includes the skills of enquiry and communication. Pupils in year 11 do further work on the European Union. All pupils are involved in active citizenship by voting for year council and school council members. Pupils are developing skills of participation and responsible action through activities including drugs education week and sports day.

100. Many of these opportunities have yet to be explicitly identified to the pupils as their learning in citizenship and the teaching of the various strands is not monitored on a regular basis. No teaching of citizenship was seen during the inspection, but, from work in the pupils' folders and from displays, the standards of attainment are in line with the average. The achievement of pupils is satisfactory. Assessment and reporting has yet to be carried out. Leadership and management of this subject are unsatisfactory because statutory requirements are not being met.

## Work related learning (WRL)

Provision in work related learning (WRL) is **very good**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has done a lot of work on WRL at this early stage of its introduction into schools.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Work experience for pupils in year 11 is particularly well developed
- Personal, social and health education programme makes a significant input to WRL.
- WRL has an insufficiently high profile in the wider range of lessons.

### Commentary

101. The school is well ahead in introducing this new emphasis into pupils' learning in years 10 and 11. A co-ordinator has already been appointed and he is working hard to develop and raise the profile of this new educational initiative. Overall the achievement of pupils is good, due in large part to the work experience that they have in Year 11. In addition to the work placements themselves, pupils do extensive work in preparation for it and in follow-up. This happens in the PSHE programme where pupils prepare useful work experience booklets. This is consolidated through work in English where pupils complete coursework about their experiences. Other examples of pupils learning through work are by visits to such places as the Didcot power station and various leisure organisations. Pupils can learn *about* work through a variety of business planning activities, by completing application forms and by interview simulation. Careers work through Connexions also makes a good input to this. Opportunities to learn about work also occur across various subject departments including science, where pupils are encouraged to relate their learning to the world of work at most opportunities. Units of work in the core religious education programme cover topics like work, leisure and unemployment. Design and technology creates an awareness of industrial practice. A wider range of subject departments make insufficient explicit reference to WRL in the lessons, so as to raise the pupils' consciousness of its importance. Learning for work occurs in many subject departments. Pupils are encouraged to develop a range of skills that are essential in the work-place. These include the ability to summarise information, skills in ICT and social skills such as team-work and communication. A range of vocational courses in the curriculum makes an important contribution to these developments.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

103. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003. GCE AS results are only reported for those students who did not continue these subjects to GCE A level.

### **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
English literature	2	100.0	85.9	50.0	19.1	45.0	30.2
Mathematics	10	40.0	61.9	10.0	17.1	14.0	22.1
Physics	2	100.0	68.6	0.0	14.4	35.0	22.7
French	5	100.0	78.2	40.0	18.9	38.0	27.6
Geography	4	75.0	74.3	25.0	19.8	22.5	26.5
History	3	33.3	80.7	0.0	19.5	10.0	28.6
Drama (Theatre Studies)	4	100.0	86.5	25.0	19.6	35.0	30.6
Design and Technology	4	25.0	74.9	0.0	15.1	10.0	25.3
Sport/PE Studies	2	100.0	73.2	50.0	11.4	40.0	23.1

### **Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English literature	26	100.0	99.5	65.4	46.5	95.4	86.5
Mathematics	14	100.0	96.7	42.9	55.6	87.1	88.8
Physics	8	100.0	96.7	50.0	44.6	90.0	81.7
Geography	14	100.0	98.7	50.0	44.5	85.7	84.0
History	15	100.0	99.0	33.3	44.6	81.3	84.6
Drama (Theatre Studies)	10	100.0	99.5	60.0	40.1	90.0	83.6
Design and Technology	11	100.0	97.8	36.4	35.0	80.0	77.9
Sport/PE Studies	9	100.0	98.0	33.3	30.9	77.8	75.2

### **Level 2 vocational qualifications**

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	5	100	90	80	N/A	20	N/A
Health and social care	4	100	50	50	N/A	0	N/A

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

Provision in English literature is **very good**

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in AS and A-level examinations.
- Teaching and learning are very good. Most students achieve highly.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- Active learning and teaching styles are used insufficiently. This point is not covered in the text below

#### Commentary

104. Attainment on entry is slightly above average, with most students entering the course having gained grade C or better in both English and English literature. 2004 results in AS and A-level examinations are well above average. The pass rate at grades A-E for A-level English literature in 2004 was 100 per cent, with 57 per cent gaining the top grades A-B. Moreover, compared with the national figures, the subject succeeded in recruiting a higher number of boys, who went on to achieve well in comparison with other boys nationally.

105. Teaching is very good. Teachers ask challenging questions which require students to reflect deeply on key issues in the texts under study. Teachers take every opportunity to raise students' awareness of social, moral and cultural issues. Teachers set challenging homework which supports their learning. Both teachers and students make good use of the library and the Internet to research social or historical context. English lessons are characterised by lively debate and students show evidence of engagement with texts on a personal level. Students show high levels of interest, maturity and commitment. In order to raise attainment further, writing skills need to be taught explicitly and regularly. Teachers should monitor the quality of students' files throughout the course to ensure students' notes are good enough to support final revision. An excellent lunchtime club on art history enriches and extends sixth form provision for English and related subjects.

106. Teachers show mastery of texts and good understanding of the assessment objectives. They successfully prepare students for Oxbridge entry examinations. The strong commitment to teaching literature, seen lower down the school, ensures that students enter the sixth form at Wallingford having read more widely than many others of the same age. As a consequence, students generally embark on sixth form courses, particularly in English literature, theatre or media studies with higher levels of confidence. This was evidenced by one Year 12 student's personal reading profile, in which she enthusiastically described her own wider reading and her preferences.

### MEDIA STUDIES

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards are well above average in AS and A-level examinations.
- Teaching and learning are very good. Most students achieve highly.

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge but lack some essential resources.

### **Commentary**

107. In 2004, the pass rate at grades A-E for both AS and A-level Media Studies was 100 per cent. At AS level, 67 per cent gained grades A-C and in A-level the rate for A-C was 38 per cent. 108. The quality and quantity of students' work seen during the inspection was very good. Teachers had covered a lot of work in the first five weeks of the course.

109. Teaching is very good. Lessons are well paced and teaching is dynamic. As a result, students show high levels of interest and enthusiasm, for example, preparing talks on films they have studied independently.

110. Teachers display very good subject knowledge and have a good grasp of the demands of the examinations. However, teaching is sometimes restricted by a lack of essential equipment and resources, such as digital still and video cameras, up-to-date facilities for creating and viewing DVDs or film editing.

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

111. Standards in literacy in the sixth form are well above average. Students show higher order reading skills, particularly in inference and deduction. They confidently select and retrieve information for research purposes, for example in history. They are able to write at length, using the correct terminology, as they do in media studies when discussing angle shots. They take full part in discussions and listen sensitively to the views of others, for example, in English literature when analysing texts.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

#### **French**

Provision in French is **good**

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

- Standards in AS and A-levels have continued to rise since the last inspection.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership is effective.
- Students are highly motivated and work very hard.
- Very few students choose to continue studying French.
- Oral and extended written work is not developed enough.

### **Commentary**

112. Results in AS and A-level examinations have continued to improve markedly. The proportion of students achieving the higher grades A-B fell in 2004. The number of students choosing to continue studying French is very low. There is, therefore, wide variation in the composition of those small groups, but an almost total lack of boys. Groups are too small to draw reliable national comparisons.

113. Students achieve well. When students enter 6<sup>th</sup> form groups, achievement varies from well above average to average, since all students are able to choose French regardless of



their grade at GCSE. Of the four communication skills, reading and listening are well developed, whereas speaking and writing are underdeveloped. Students extract information very well from written passages and from tapes of authentic French spoken at a fast speed. From the beginning, Year 12 students are encouraged to talk about their work in class, but when speaking in French they are self-conscious and only use very short sentences. One Year 13 class observed on two occasions and with different teachers, often gave 'yes' and 'no' answers. There is little evidence of extended writing.

114. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers involve all students in lessons. As a result, students are very well motivated and learn effectively. The department uses the part-time foreign language assistant effectively for targeting oral practice and providing students with access to a good range of different authentic materials. These are provided by satellite television and pre-booked sessions in the ICT suites, where students also access the Internet. Teachers are enthusiastic and provide good role models, with the result that students are serious and committed to their work. Most lessons are well planned so that activities are varied, although advanced work for higher attainers is insufficiently emphasised when speaking and writing. Students remain attentive throughout lessons. Additional lessons are offered on a voluntary basis, especially immediately before examinations. Students are very positive about their course which they enjoy and have trust in their teachers. All 6<sup>th</sup> formers have the opportunity to take part in exchange trips and visits to various destinations in France. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Despite the great diversity within very small groups results have improved markedly.

115. Good leadership ensures that teachers work well as a team. Although 6<sup>th</sup> form classes at AS and A level are shared between two teachers, each has clearly defined topics to cover with students. The course is well managed and the team, together with senior management, works hard to persuade more students to study French post-16.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The relationships between students and teachers are excellent.
- The standard of teaching is very good overall and excellent in further mathematics.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent.
- There is a lack of schemes of work in Year 12 and 13.
- The use of ICT is not well developed.

### **Commentary**

116. Overall, results in 2003 examinations at A-level were above the national averages, with all pupils obtaining an A-E grade and over 40 per cent obtaining grade A. Standards in further mathematics are also well above average. Provisional results for 2004 show that the Year 13 results are being maintained, although results gained in Year 12 indicate that half of pupils do not obtain a grade in the AS level examination. Standards of work seen during the inspection indicated that standards are rising, particularly in Year 12. Here, the lack of curriculum coverage in previous years, which resulted in a large number of ungraded pupils, is being addressed. Although more boys than girls opt to do mathematics in the sixth form, they do equally well. This overall rise in standards represents good progress since the last inspection.

117. Students may begin an A-level course with a grade C on the GCSE higher papers. Pre-course work and an intensive algebra module at the start of Year 12, together with good support by the teachers outside of lessons, ensures that all students have the opportunity to succeed. Students value very highly their teachers' willingness and availability to help them throughout the course. The department is addressing the significant failure rate in Year 12 by ensuring that first courses in pure mathematics are covered much more quickly and providing support where it is needed through the weekly mathematics clinic. This is designed to ensure adequate time for full coverage of second courses in pure mathematics. Evidence seen during the inspection, six weeks into the term, indicates that this is working well and that high demands are being made of students. Students in a Year 12 class were observed confidently investigating the effect of transforming different functions, sketching the resultant curves and presenting correct generalisations. In a Year 12 statistics class, students found a regression equation using the method of least squares and understood the limitations of extrapolating the line. A year 12 further mathematics group had completed a first course in mechanics and was confidently modelling and solving problems using Newton's Laws of Motion. A Year 13 class was able to find missing forces on a uniform beam by taking moments about appropriate points.

118. Teaching and learning are very good. All teaching seen was very good or excellent. The teaching in further mathematics lessons was excellent. Teachers' outstanding knowledge of the subject enables them to challenge and extend students and processes. Techniques were modelled expertly, using well planned targeted questions to assess and probe students' understanding and provide clarification where necessary. A variety of methods were used to develop the students as independent learners, including encouragement to work collaboratively, choose pathways through consolidation exercises and make their own notes. In an excellent Year 13 further mathematics class, the teacher used a straw, a piece of paper and a light source to develop students' thinking around the intersection of lines with planes in 3-D vector geometry. The relationships between students and teachers are excellent and considerable mutual respect ensures both teachers and students really enjoy working together. The quality of students' learning needs to be supported by the use of ICT which at present is not well developed.

119. The department offers a wide variety of courses to students in Year 12 and Year 13 which ranges from a single AS level through to A-levels in mathematics and further mathematics. For mathematics, the full range of pure mathematics modules is offered together with first modules in mechanics, statistics and decision mathematics. For further mathematics, the full range of pure mathematics modules are offered, together with further modules on mechanics, statistics and decision mathematics.

120. Leadership and management are good. As in the main school, good procedures are in place to ensure that teachers are able to teach and support students' learning effectively. The need to increase the pace of the Year 12 curriculum has been identified and tackled as a result of departmental self-review and is having a significant impact on raising standards. The head of department has identified that there is still work to be done in developing schemes of work in Years 12 and 13.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

121. Standards of mathematics are well above average in the sixth form and more than adequate for the subjects students are studying. For example, in geography, students are able

to analyse data effectively. In science, students are able to use complex formulae and demonstrate excellent graphing skills.

## **SCIENCE**

### **PHYSICS**

Provision in physics is **very good**.

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

- Teaching is very good and students achieve very well.
- Students obtain very high A-level results.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Students do not record self-evaluation regularly.

#### **Commentary**

122. A-level results in 2003 were well above average and were similar for 2004. The number of students who sat the 2003 AS-level examination was too small to make comparisons with national results. Students achieved well and made good progress from Year 11 to 13, with almost half of the students gaining higher grades than expected, based on their GCSE results.

123. The standard of work seen in Year 12 was good and in Year 13 very good. Students achieve well in lessons. They enjoy the subject and are well motivated, especially by practical investigation work. Students are secure in their understanding of basic physics concepts. They can explain electrical current in terms of electron flow and light energy emission in terms of photons. They carry out practical work efficiently and with confidence and communicate their knowledge and understanding well. Students' mathematical and ICT skills are good and well used to support their learning. Students are creative and are keen to demonstrate special effects such as the stroboscopic effect.

124. The teaching is very good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and motivate students well. They offer students a wide range of practical activities to underpin their learning and set high expectations of students' understanding. Challenging assignment work is set regularly. Students' grasp of concepts is often checked by test and examination questions and students work well independently. Students' work is marked diagnostically and general areas of difficulty are discussed in class to ensure full understanding. Although teachers make clear what students need to do to improve, students themselves do not use their self-evaluation sheets regularly.

125. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for creating the conditions that enable students to attain the highest standards and the department is very well managed. A team of well-qualified, committed teachers and laboratory technicians ensure that students learn very effectively. The students' learning is well supported by very good accommodation and resources.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teaching is very good.
- There is very good leadership of the subject.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- Standards are rising and reflect very good teaching and organisation.
- There are good relationships between teachers and students.
- There is insufficient provision of examination pathways for students of all abilities.

## **Commentary**

126. Information and communication technology is now offered at AS and A level. Interest is growing and the school is teaching these courses for the first time. Teachers have worked hard to develop the courses and share their enthusiasm with the students. Standards are rising and work seen during the inspection indicates that these high standards are being maintained. The standard of work seen was good, which represents a very good level of achievement, given students' average attainment at the start of the course. Students are successfully applying skills in new areas and they all receive good support and guidance. Students are well motivated and enjoy their ICT studies, which leads to a good atmosphere for learning. Provision has improved considerably since the previous inspection and numbers are steadily rising. Post-16 students are taking advantage of the learning opportunities provided through improved resources and increased access.

127. Teaching is very good overall and often excellent, with well structured lessons incorporating a variety of challenging tasks ensuring that students are working to capacity. Teachers' expectations are high, so students are encouraged to produce good results. The teaching materials and resources used stimulate interest and engage students well. Students are adept at using computers for research purposes and for improving the quality of their work. They make good use of easy access to the central network and students who do not have facilities at home have no difficulty in completing work units. Work demonstrates a good balance between independent learning and teacher support. Research skills are well developed. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent, enabling them to advise and guide students effectively, giving good support to individuals in classes where attainment reflects a wide spread of standards. Good arrangements for assessment and monitoring student standards and progress are in place using both the school policy and examination criteria.

128. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and reflect the vision and strategy of the school to raise the profile of the subject. Detailed analysis of strengths and areas for development has taken place. The team leader has drawn up a departmental development plan with clearly defined actions for raising students' achievement and increasing the provision of ICT examination courses for students of all abilities. Improvements since the last inspection have been very good and the subject has excellent capacity for further improvements.

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

129. Provision has now improved and the use of ICT in other subjects is satisfactory, while pupils' competence is very good. A few subject areas are not providing sufficient opportunities for students to use ICT to assist their learning.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have risen dramatically since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is very good overall, with excellent knowledge of the subject and examination requirements.
- Students show interest and enthusiasm and have good general knowledge.
- ICT is insufficiently developed or used, although students have very good ICT skills.

## **Commentary**

130. Standards have improved over time, particularly the proportion of higher grades A-B attained. Examination results were above the national average in 2003, at both AS and A-level. Results for 2004 were similar, but with more A and B grades. There is no significant difference between the achievement of male and female students over time, although the size and composition of groups vary. Value added analysis by the school showed achievement from GCSE to A-level to be in line with national expectations.

131. Standards of work seen were above national expectations in the small Year 12 group, and in the two larger Year 13 groups. Reasons for the smaller uptake in Year 12 are given as the wider choice of new post-16 courses for that year, and a smaller number taking GCSE in 2004. Although at an early stage in their course, the students showed very good understanding of the demographic transition model, realised its limitations and were able to relate it to specific examples. The learning activity of matching fertility and mortality statements to the UK and Sri Lanka improved interpretation skills and developed further understanding of less and more economically developed countries.

132. The standards and achievement of Year 13 students are above national expectations. They are prepared well for A-level examinations with frequent practice questions, which are marked well to give students understanding of their strengths and areas for development. The larger option group was studying glacial erosion features and processes, by cutting and sticking matching statements, presenting reasoned arguments to the teacher and to each other for their decisions. A very interesting discussion arose from one student's perceptive question about truncated spurs, and how this related to work on rivers. Students' files showed comprehensive and thorough notes with breadth of coverage as well as depth. Another group had researched economic development and prepared presentations on globalisation, newly industrialised countries and the new division of labour. These showed very good understanding of the issues, and demonstrated excellent research skills combined with varied presentation ability, some students using ICT to very good effect. Displays indicate the value of a residential field course for developing geographical skills by first-hand observation, recording and interpretation. Students in Year 13 spoke highly of their interest and enthusiasm for geography.

133. Teaching and learning are very good, with some excellent features. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are well qualified and experienced. They prepare lessons thoroughly and structure them to develop geographical and personal skills as well as depth of knowledge and understanding of human and physical features and processes. Teachers have high expectations, give clear explanations, and know their students well, relating to their unique personalities as well as recognising their prior and potential attainment. Text-book and paper resources are good, but ICT resources are limited and their use is insufficient in teaching and learning geography, although students' ICT skills are very good.

134. Curriculum planning is good, with thorough coverage of all aspects of the A-level course, and includes key skills and personal development, although the written schemes of work are minimal. Leadership and management are good, with the enthusiastic new curriculum co-ordinator building well on the competent work of the previous head of department. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

## **HISTORY**

Provision in history is **very good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Excellent student attitudes to the courses ensure very good examination results
- Very good teaching takes every opportunity to make students into independent thinkers
- Students achieve very well due to good teaching

### **Commentary.**

135. In 2003, A-level results were below the national average for grades A and B, above for grades A to E. AS level results were above the national average, with 100 per cent of the female students attaining A or B grades. The trend over the last three years has been one of improvement, continued into 2004 when the proportion of A and B grades was much higher, and this represents very good achievement.

136. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average, with no significant differences between males and females, though there are fewer female students in all the option groups. Students are efficient note takers and teachers do not rely on printed handouts to impart information. Year 12 students have very quickly accumulated a good knowledge of seventeenth century European politics and discuss these using specialist terminology. By Year 13 they can give comprehensive accounts of Oliver Cromwell's aims for England, and assess whether these were successful or not. The teacher's skilled leadership of discussion in this lesson led them to be able to identify the conflicts between these various aims. Because of a high level of literacy skills they are very good at writing the reasoned extended essays essential for this course.

137. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge enables them to present the subject with clarity, so that students' learning moves forward at a steady pace. Lessons are well structured, so no time is wasted. Resources are well used; handouts and checklists serve as useful prompts but do not dominate the proceedings, and students learn to synthesise information from a number of textbooks, recognising the value of bringing more than one source or opinion to bear on their work. Students are encouraged to think for themselves and teachers skilfully develop themes through the students' contribution to discussions, rather than through didactic explanation.

138. Leadership and management are good. Students enjoy their history and this enjoyment is reflected in the positive attitudes in class that enable them to learn a challenging subject so very well. Last year all students who began both the AS and the A2 courses completed them, which is a tribute to the quality of the provision.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

## **Three-dimensional (3D) product design**

The provision in 3D product design is **satisfactory**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good.
- A new head of department has been recently appointed and leadership of the subject is now satisfactory
- Recent results have been below average

### **Commentary**

139. Results in A and AS level in this subject in 2003 were below national averages. In recent years the results gained by students in A-level 3D product design have been consistently below average and below the results gained by students in the other design technology related A-levels offered by the department.

140. The appointment of a new head of department with a successful track record in teaching resistant materials has already improved the progress students make and standards of the current A-level group are average. Students apply sound analytical skills to their work and their research is thorough. They have produced a suitable though limited range of design ideas for their projects. Their graphical skills are sound, though they need to develop further the use of sketching to develop and refine and communicate their design ideas. They are capable makers who draw on experience of working with a wide range of materials.

141. Teaching is good. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and effectively communicate this to students. Teachers develop productive relationships and as part of this they offer free time for individual advice and support. This advice is well informed, as teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subject. This is already producing good progress in design work. Teachers closely monitor progress and ensure that students keep to tight time targets. Very good use is made of exemplar material to give students a greater insight into what is expected of them.

142. The newly appointed head of department brings with him a passion for the subject that he communicates well to students and the staff in his department. He has a very clear view of what is needed to raise standards in the subject and the capability to do just that.

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

### **Theatre studies**

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

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

- Standards are above average in AS and A-level examinations.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students achieve well showing high levels of maturity and commitment.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge and the accommodation is very good.

#### **Commentary**

143. In 2004 the Alevel pass rate was 100 per cent, with half of the cohort obtaining the top grades A and B. At AS-level the pass rate was also 100per cent, with two thirds gaining grades A and B.

144. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. Lessons are well paced and teaching supports students in developing their creative potential. As a result, students show high levels of commitment and their ideas are imaginative. Students work well in groups, supporting each other to the full.

145. The drama studio is very well equipped and this enables teachers to use a wide range of learning and teaching methods, for example music and lighting to create mood and atmosphere for devised pieces. There is scope to offer students even more opportunities for structured reflection and evaluation.

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

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

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

- Teaching is good.
- Students achieve well due to the good teaching and good attitudes to work
- Overall standards are good, but numbers taking the course are small.
- Students need to develop greater independence.

#### **Commentary**

146. Standards are good, with students achieving well. Grades at A-level show an improvement on AS grades, with some students achieving the top A grade. Boys outnumber girls on the course, and they achieve better, although girls are more confident in clarifying learning and asking questions.

147. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons carefully to aid students' learning. Lessons tend to be heavily teacher led, with good questioning to recap, check and extend knowledge. Students are not encouraged sufficiently to develop greater independence and undertake more individual work, building on previous learning and linking to bodies of



knowledge in other subjects. Some students rely too much on teachers' inputs, rather than challenging their own thinking through questioning.

148. Students are well motivated; attendance rates are good and purposeful homework is set and completed to consolidate learning. Relationships are good and individuals are well supported.

149. The subject is well led and managed by an experienced teacher, aided by enthusiastic colleagues. There is a strong commitment to raising standards. The absence of a designated room for theory lessons results in the absence of display material to aid learning and staff have to move resources from room to room.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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