

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Beaconsfield School**

Beaconsfield

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110505

Headteacher: Miss P Madelin

Lead inspector: Mrs Susan Chamberlain

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2004

Inspection number: 270943

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern (non selective)

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 18

Gender of students: Mixed

Number on roll; 807

School address: Wattleton Road  
Beaconsfield  
Buckinghamshire

Postcode: HP9 1SJ

Telephone number: 01494 673450

Fax number: 01494 676404

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of Mr A Croft  
governors:

Date of previous 11<sup>th</sup> October 1999  
inspection:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a smaller than average secondary modern situated in a pleasant residential area within Beaconsfield. Many students come from areas that are not so advantageous. Most students have failed their eleven plus. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The school has a higher than average percentage of students whose first language is believed not to be English. Approximately a sixth of students come from minority ethnic groups. Students with special educational needs, including those with statements, account for an above average section of the school's population, although the proportion with statements is below the national average. Other than at the usual time, approximately the same number of students left the school as joined it. The school loses many potential students to local grammar and independent schools. However, it is popular and oversubscribed. The average attainment of students when they enter the school is below average.

In recent years, the sixth form has grown considerably and now has 116 students. It is smaller than most sixth forms. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below average. Similar proportions of students from ethnic minority groups join the sixth form as the main school. The attainment on entry to the sixth form is around average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7661	Susan Chamberlain	Lead inspector	
9052	Helen Barter	Lay inspector	
2200	Jim Stirrup	Team inspector	English, drama and performing arts
30597	Robina Howells	Team inspector	Mathematics
18453	Colin Lower	Team inspector	Science, health and social care
25778	Andrew Hicks	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
11190	Winifred Burke	Team inspector	Art
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography, travel and tourism
12825	Niall Carr	Team inspector	History, business education
4829	Ian Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
12475	Stuart Johnson	Team inspector	Music
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education, leisure and recreation
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education, citizenship
8859	Tom Dodd	Team inspector	Design and technology

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International  
 Upperton House  
 The Avenue  
 Eastbourne  
 East Sussex  
 BN21 3YB

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school. Students receive a good quality of education which is underpinned by a very positive ethos in terms of learning and attitudes. The school is careful to include all students and as a result students like coming to school. A number of barriers to learning, including difficulties in recruitment of staff and limited funding, have been diminished because of the positive leadership. As a result, the school provides **good** value for money.

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

- Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is very good. Leaders provide very good role models that call attention to the fact that every student matters.
- Students are cared for very well.
- The school is very effective in promoting good relationships, including racial harmony.
- Students' achievement is good in Years 10 to 13; it reflects the good teaching they receive in these years.
- The curriculum is good and innovative. The provision of work related learning is very good.
- Students often fail to take control of their own learning and do not learn independently. They do not have enough access to information and communication technology (ICT) nor do they use the library sufficiently.
- There is room to further disseminate good practice to ensure that improvement is made in the teaching of subjects where staff recruitment problems have occurred.
- In mainstream classes, there is inconsistent availability and use of well adapted, individual teaching programmes for students with special educational needs.
- The access to and use of data is still in its infancy. Because of this students' progress is not widely monitored.
- The consistency of the expectations of the form tutors' role is insufficiently monitored.
- A small number of disruptive students adversely affect teaching and achievement.

Improvement since the previous inspection is **good**. Key improvements have occurred in staffing at middle management level. Teaching and learning have improved. The curriculum has made major advances; it is more relevant now it includes a substantial element of vocational education and work related learning. Some new buildings have enhanced the environment for learning and support the school's bid for performing arts specialist status. Most issues raised at the previous inspection have been partially well addressed. There is still work to do on assessment and ICT.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

#### Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations			D	D

Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E	E*	E	
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*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 students attained at the end of Year 9.*

Students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and improving. Those who have special educational needs or who have English as an additional language make good progress at this level. In Years 10 and 11 they all, including the gifted and talented, achieve well. Contrary to publicly available statistics, inspectors found that students were gaining considerably during this time. The best achievement occurred in art in Years 10 and 11. Generally, girls outperform boys but boys are slowly catching up. In Years 7 to 9, students have good competency in mathematics and average competencies in English and ICT skills. In Years 10 and 11, their competencies in these areas are average. Achievement is occasionally hindered by the disruptive behaviour of a few students. **Students make good progress in their personal development, as a result of the good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.** Generally, students have **good** attitudes to school and most behave **well**. A few are frequently disruptive. Attendance is **satisfactory** in the main school but **unsatisfactory** in the sixth form.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Teaching and learning are **good**, overall. They are **good** in Years 10 to 13 and **satisfactory** in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have good classroom management skills. They use a wide range of strategies to make their lessons interesting. Assessment is **satisfactory**. The school provides a **good** curriculum which is well matched to the needs of the students. The provision for work-related learning is **very good**. The curriculum is accessible to all and provides opportunities for all students. In terms of care, welfare, health and safety students' needs are **very well** met. **They** are provided with **good** support, advice and guidance. There is a **good** partnership with parents. The school makes **good** use of the wider community and partnerships outside the school. Links with other schools and colleges are **good**.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership by the headteacher and senior management team are **very good**. Management is **effective** and has improved since the appointment of a number of new heads of department. The headteacher maintains a very positive approach, despite shortages in budget and staffing. A vocational and work related direction is clearly emphasised by leaders. Governance is **good**. Governors are **well led**.

## PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents think that this is a **good**, friendly and caring school; it has **good** links with them. Particularly, they like the **wide** range of extra activities available for their children. Students like school; they feel that they are expected to work hard. They appreciate the good relationships they have with staff. Students in Year 7 are very pleased with the way they have settled in.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that students learn more independently, including their increased use of the library and access to ICT.
- Improve access to and the use of assessment data.
- Monitor and improve the consistency of the role of the form tutor.
- Disseminate good practice to improve teaching in areas where staff recruitment has been problematic, particularly ensuring that well matched teaching strategies and work for students with special educational needs in main classes is provided.
- Manage disruptive behaviour so that it does not affect teaching and achievement.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- By providing a daily act of collective worship.



## SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

### THE SIXTH FORM AT BEACONSFIELD SCHOOL

#### OVERALL EVALUATION

A good range of GCE AS-level, A-level and vocational courses are offered on the school's site and, at the nearby high school in this sixth form of 115 students.

**The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good.** In the work seen, standards were about average. In 2003 and 2004, the numbers of students that take many courses have been too low for statistical comparison nationally. For those that could be compared at A-level, grade quality was well below average. 2004 saw a similar situation at A-level, the pass rate and grade quality were well below the 2003 national average. However, most students achieve well. Value-added data shows that students in this sixth form are achieving well against similar schools in the locality, where selection occurs at eleven-plus. The best achievement in examinations in 2003 was in the AVCE courses, with above average grade scores in health and social care and average in leisure and recreation. Teaching is usually at least good, as it was in the large majority of the lessons seen. Most students learn in a mature, adult way, justifying carefully their point of view. The sixth form is managed well: it runs effectively, is very cost effective but has outgrown the present accommodation. The current arrangement with a nearby school gives students the bonus of extended choice of subjects, although an anomaly in timetabling prevents some students' aspiration to study science subjects.

#### **The main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- Standards were above average in 2003 in AVCE health and social care reflecting good achievement.
- A-level results were well below average in 2003 but in line with students' prior attainment.
- Most sixth formers achieve well – a tribute to students' good efforts and the good teaching they receive.
- The arrangements with the high school open up a wide range of courses and increase subject viability.
- The students and parents regard the sixth form as a very good place to study.

## 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,	Provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . Standards are below average, with achievement satisfactory. Teachers limit students' achievement by exercising too much control and providing too few opportunities for group activities.
Mathematics	Provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . Satisfactory teaching, learning and achievement in lessons but no previous examination results from which to judge standards.
Science	
Information and communication technology	Provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . Teaching ensures that where students attend regularly and complete coursework, achievement is at least satisfactory and standards are in line with expectations. Retention rates, however, are low.
Geography	Provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . Results are below average, but groups are very small and present standards are average. Good leadership and management, good teaching and excellent student attitudes lead to good achievement.
History	Provision is <b>good</b> . Consistently good teaching ensures that students increasingly understand how past events have shaped present day living. Students develop growing independence in using and instructing others how to access historical sources.
French	Provision is <b>good</b> . Good teaching effectively helps students, after a three-year gap in studying the subject, to achieve satisfactorily by consolidating basic grammar and acquiring relevant topic vocabulary.
Art	Provision is <b>very good</b> . The very good teaching challenges minds to develop ideas and form opinions and as a result students grow in confidence and independence and achieve very well.
Design & Technology	Provision is <b>good</b> . Standards are in line with expectations in lessons. Teaching is mainly good.
Travel & Tourism	Provision is <b>good</b> . Below average results, but groups have been very small and achievement is good. Good teaching, good leadership and management and excellent student motivation.
Leisure & Recreation	The quality of teaching is <b>good</b> . Students are well motivated and enthusiastic about the course.
Health & Social Care	Provision is <b>good</b> . As a result of the good planning and resources provided and the positive relationships, students achieve well and reach above average standards.
Performing Arts	Provision is <b>good</b> . Teachers' good subject knowledge results in students enjoying the range of activities offered and achieving well. Numbers taking the subject have been too small for judging standards.
Business Education	This was sampled. Provision is <b>good</b> . Standards are below average. 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

Students are provided with a **good** level of care and support. They generally display maturity. All are very happy with the level and nature of the guidance they receive. Those who were interviewed felt that they had someone to whom they could turn. They blamed their own failings as learners rather than any lack of guidance and support by the school for not always achieving as well as their teachers expected them to do.

### **Leadership and management in the sixth form**

These aspects are good overall. Leadership is very good and overall management is good. The vision to raise numbers in the sixth form by providing a mixture of academic and vocational courses has been very successful but has led to the student population outgrowing the current accommodation. The sixth form runs smoothly and most students achieve well. Sixth form teaching is monitored well and is very cost effective. Leadership and management are good in most sixth-form subjects. Leadership is excellent in leisure and tourism and very good in art, business studies, design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages. It is satisfactory in science, mathematics and ICT. The learning climate for students is good, a point they well appreciate. Sixth form attendance was unsatisfactory during the last academic year and also during the inspection

### **Students' views of the sixth form**

Those students whose views are known regard the school very favourably. All enjoy being in the sixth-form, most think the courses available meet their requirements and feel that they are well treated. Homework is accepted as a positive part of the provision. Advice on sixth-form courses, guidance on post-school work or education, personal support and enrichment activities are all given positive ratings. Inspectors judge that these aspects, taken together, represent good provision for these students. Overall, students enjoy and benefit greatly from being a sixth-former at this school.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

The achievement of students is **good**. It is **satisfactory**, but improving, in Years 7 to 9 and **good** in Years 10 and 11. Students who are either gifted or talented achieve in line with other students. The achievement of students with special educational needs and those whose first language is not necessarily English is **good** across Years 7 to 11. Standards seen during the inspection are **in line** with expectations. By the end of Year 9, standards in statutory tests and teacher assessments are **average**. By the end of Year 11, capped GCSE results are below average for 5 A\* to C grades, slightly above average for 5 A\* to G grades and well above average for 1 A\* to G grades.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11. They achieve very well in art in these years.
- Standards seen were above expectations in drama and art in Years 7 to 9 and well above expectations in art in Years 10 and 11.
- Students have reversed a trend of limited gains in Years 10 and 11, resulting in more substantial improvement.
- In English, boys achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Students who have special educational needs achieve better than others in Years 7 to 9.
- Students with English as an additional language achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form.

#### Commentary

##### Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.7 (32.3)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	34.2 (34.3)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	32.9 (33.9)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 141 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

1. Students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and improving. It is good in English, drama, mathematics, science, art, geography, ICT, music, religious education and physical education. It is satisfactory in all other subjects. In mathematics, students' good achievement with respect to data handling is exemplified by their contributions on their individual whiteboards. At the end of a geography lesson, students were able to answer well the teacher's questions on volcanoes. In an ICT lesson, students could give detailed explanations of the skills necessary to design a web site. Some students were competent at using hyperlinks. In the work seen, standards are in line with national expectations in most subjects, but above expectations in drama and art. In drama for example, the teacher gave opportunities for students to celebrate their achievements. In art lessons,

students gain ownership over the decision making process. They reach high standards whilst appreciating that element of control.

## Key Stage 4

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	28 (39)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (86)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	29.3 (29.3)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 122 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. In Years 10 and 11, published data suggests that students do not make sufficient gains at this stage. However, if this has been the case, inspection statistics indicate that now students make good progress which mirrors the good teaching they receive. A number of boys in English do not fit into this category. In science, some students do not progress as well as they should. Students' achievement is mostly good in English, drama, science, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music, physical education and health and social care. It is very good in art and satisfactory elsewhere. In an art lesson on the environment, all concentrated very well on a 2-dimensional project leading to 3-dimensional; they achieved very well in terms of detailed drawings of buildings. In design and technology, students were interested and attentive as they developed coursework ideas. In a history lesson on the Roman Empire, students made good progress in terms of their use of source based investigation. In the work seen, standards are in line with national expectations, overall. They are well above expectation in art, above expectations in drama, design and technology and history and below expectations in English, science and religious education. In health and social care, students achieved well as they gained a clear understanding of the services available for adolescents. Girls indicated good gains in a netball lesson in their ability to officiate and to evaluate each other's performance. In music, all groups achieved well because of the structured tasks when using ICT to create a multi-layer composition. Girls are performing better than boys but this trend is becoming less marked.

3. The English department uses the literacy strand of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy in an effective manner. It is making a positive contribution to improving standards in Years 7 to 9. Competence in English language and literacy skills is satisfactory. In mathematics, students' competence is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Students start ICT from a low base but are averagely competent by the end of Years 9 and 11.

4. Students with special educational needs achieve well in Years 7 to 11, often making better progress than other students so that a significant proportion of them no longer have special needs by the time they reach Year 10. In 2004, every student with a statement of special educational need achieved at least 2 GCSE grades; most achieved five or six. They achieve well in art, design and technology, geography, music, physical education and their achievement is at least satisfactory in all other subjects. The few sixth form students with special educational needs achieve at least in line with their peers.

5. Students who are gifted and /or talented achieve as do others. Students who have English as an additional language are catered for well and achieve well as a result. The lack of racial harassment and inclusive ethos enables all students to achieve their best. However, some disruption by a few difficult students, on occasions, hinders the achievement of others.

## 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	89.1 (72.4)	85.5 (92.1)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	8.9 (8.6)	27.6 (33.8)
Average point score per student	149.8 (117.2)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 40 students in this year group. Figures in brackets are for 2002.*

6. The GCE A-level results in 2003 were well below average. This was true for both the average points that students gained per subject and for the quality of grades obtained. The pass rate was well below the national average. In 2004, the A-level results were similar. Taking into account the quality of grades that they previously gained in GCSE examinations, most students make good progress in their studies to A-level. This is a picture of good achievement.

7. The GCE Advanced Supplementary (AS)-level results show a similar picture. However, AVCE subjects are doing much better.

8. The standard of sixth-form work seen during the inspection was average and well in line with course requirements in English, performing arts, mathematics, French, history, art, design and technology, health and social care, travel and tourism, leisure and recreation and business studies. Students' key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT capability are similar to those found nationally. The climate for learning is good and most students achieve well during their time in the sixth form.

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

Most students have **good** attitudes to school and behave well. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is **good**. Attendance is **satisfactory** in the main school, but **unsatisfactory** in the sixth form.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have positive attitudes to school and to their learning.
- While most students behave well, occasional unsatisfactory behaviour from small groups of students disrupts the learning of others.
- Assemblies contribute well to students' spiritual development, but the school does not meet statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship.

### Commentary

9. Students like their school and participate well in its many activities during and after the school day. Most want to learn and are enthusiastic about opportunities to take part in clubs, sports matches and musical productions. Students generally feel that it is a good school to be at and that they are expected to work hard. They appreciate the good relationships they have with staff and the ease with which they can seek their help. Year 7



students are very positive about the way in which they have settled in quickly and are very happy that they have come to this school.

10. Most students are clear about the school's expectations for behaviour. They respond well to teachers' good classroom management, work co-operatively with each other and apply themselves well to their learning. There are instances, however, of noisy and deliberately disruptive behaviour by a small minority of students, both boys and girls, which affect the quality of learning for everyone. Around school behaviour is good. Students generally move sensibly around the narrow corridors and staircases. Students acknowledge that there is occasional bullying but feel that staff take their concerns seriously and usually deal well with any incidents.

11. The students' personal development is good overall. Moral development is well supported by the school's behaviour policy with a strong emphasis on knowing right from wrong. Issues such as the influence of media advertising on young people are explored well through the SPACE programme. Social development is good and enhanced by a strong programme of extra-curricular activities, including participation in local community events such as the Festival of Lights. The provision for their cultural development has improved since the last inspection because the school clearly identifies opportunities throughout the curriculum, for example during Black History Month, to enhance their knowledge of the wider world.

12. Assemblies observed during the inspection offered students the opportunity to reflect quietly on their own and others' experiences, such as those of a Muslim student during the period of Ramadan. However, there is inconsistency in the way in which the thought for the week is used in tutor periods to extend students' spiritual development and often this does not take place at all. Consequently, the school is not meeting the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. This weakens the overall satisfactory provision for students' spiritual development.

### **Attendance**

13. Students' attendance is average and continues to increase gradually in line with national trends. There are secure systems in place for following up any unauthorised absences. Students' punctuality to school and to lessons is satisfactory.

### **Exclusions**

14. The number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions is broadly average for this size of school. Exclusions are used appropriately to give a clear message that abusive or disruptive behaviour will not be tolerated. Support for those students who are excluded once they return to school is good. Parents are kept well informed during the process.

### **Sixth form**

15. Most students enjoy being members of the sixth form. They feel that they grow in independence and maturity as they progress into their final year at school. They speak highly of their teachers, the courses on offer and the sporting opportunities open to them. They enjoy the support that they give to each other in all their activities both in and out of school. They respond well in lessons and show increasingly positive attitudes. Students in

Year 12 recognise that they need to develop the capacity to work independently and to not over-rely on teachers for information. Students behave well around the school and are good role models for others to follow.

16. While most students have good attitudes to school, however, attendance in the sixth form is below acceptable levels. In most lessons there are some students missing. The school recognises that it needs to be more rigorous in its accurate recording and monitoring of students' absence from lesson to lesson.

## Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.5	School data :	0.9
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of students*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	641	44	2
White – Irish	3		
White – any other White background	24	3	
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	10	1	
Mixed – White and Black African	2	1	
Mixed – White and Asian	10	1	
Mixed – any other mixed background	4		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	19	1	
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	10		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3		
Black or Black British – African	3		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	5		
Chinese	2		
Any other ethnic group	64	5	

*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.** Teaching and learning are good overall. Assessment is **satisfactory**. The quality of the curriculum is **good**, especially its work related aspects. There is a **good** range of enrichment activities. Students' personal development programme is **good**. Arrangements to ensure students' care, welfare and health are **very good**. Links and communication with parents are **good**.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**, overall. They are **good** in Years 10 to 13 and **satisfactory** in Years 7 to 9. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good classroom management skills.
- The good efforts of unqualified and newly qualified teachers minimise the potential ill effects resulting from difficulties in recruitment of staff.

- Teachers use a wide range of strategies to make their lessons interesting.
- Students' spiritual and moral development is enhanced by teachers' imaginative and extensive use of their knowledge to broaden lesson content.
- Delay in starts and disruption cause some unsatisfactory lessons.
- Sixth formers are encouraged to find evidence and justify their views to promote good learning.

## Commentary

17. Teaching is better in Years 10 to 13 than in Years 7 to 9. It is best in both Years 7 and 13 and weakest in Year 9, where some disruptive behaviour is found to have an adverse effect. Teaching is good overall and impressive when one considers the difficulties encountered when recruiting staff and the financial restrictions under which the school is operating. A number of unqualified and newly qualified staff are trying very hard to fill gaps. On the whole they are doing this successfully. There is room to disseminate good practice further, to ensure that improvement is made in the teaching of subjects where staff recruitment problems have occurred. Students' learning mirrors the quality of teaching very closely. Students do not have enough access to ICT, nor do they use the library sufficiently. Consequently, they often fail to take control of their own learning and learn independently.

18. Teachers in good and very good lessons have very good classroom management skills. As was seen in mathematics, the teacher invoked an immediate response when teaching statistics, whenever she requested the students to either stop or start work. Teachers give students frequent opportunities to reflect on previous activities. In drama for example, students indicated their improved understanding when they explained dramatic techniques and used the appropriate drama vocabulary in their responses.

19. Planning is very good. Most teachers use a three part lesson with good effect. They include a wide range of activities, which are timed well to ensure maximum benefit. In geography, a series of activities were moved through at a fast pace, so that students were constantly re-engaged in the learning process. As a result, they achieved well. A very well planned lesson was initiated by engaging students' interest by use of a video clip about the Docklands environment in "Only Fools and Horses".

20. Teaching strategies that are used successfully across subjects include group, pair and individual activities. Teachers use flash cards, work and evaluation sheets, keyboards and computers effectively, although there are too few computers to ensure full involvement. In a food lesson, the teaching was brisk; it involved good questioning techniques, which persuaded students to think hard and respond well in an atmosphere that was conducive to learning. In many lessons, teachers try to involve aspects of citizenship. A religious education lesson on aspects of Buddhism made a strong contribution to both spiritual and moral development, as well as to citizenship. Demanding work provoked intelligent responses.

21. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good and they exercise their craft well. In religious education lessons, for example they clarify the issues raised with confidence. In an art lesson, standards of drawing were above average, because students had learned to act on written evaluations made by the teacher, to improve their work.

22. Unsatisfactory lessons are often disrupted by delays in starting because of lateness of students or excessive noise levels, as was seen in both mathematics and art.

Occasionally, as a reaction to inspection, teachers, in a wish to be seen purveying their skills, inappropriately conduct lessons to a minority of students, the others remaining silent. A very good lesson on smoking was presented with clarity and confidence, but could have been given an extra edge if control sufficiently firm. On occasions, unsatisfactory teaching occurs. In these lessons, students achieved very little, as in a science lesson where the teacher had a variety of tasks available but did not evaluate learning sufficiently before moving on to the next item.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 164 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (3%)	30 (18%)	76 (46%)	46 (28%)	8 (5%)	0 (0)	0 (0)

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

23. The English department uses a good intervention programme in Year 7 to support those students who failed to achieve a Level 4 in their end of Key Stage 2 statutory tests. Although in place for over a year the school has not yet monitored the success of its strategies for the development of literacy across the school.

24. Students with special educational needs are taught very well in the many withdrawal and support groups that run throughout the week. Special programmes are devised on an individual basis and students work through these in a calm and productive atmosphere, receiving one-to-one attention. Their progress is carefully monitored through comprehensive records. In mainstream subject lessons, students with statements are generally well supported by learning support assistants who are familiar with the needs of the students, but sometimes less familiar with the requirements of the subject specialisms, such as design and technology. Very good support was seen in a geography lesson, for example, where the support assistant had been able to work successfully with a student to bring him up to the same level as the rest of the class, after a period of absence from school. Support for students in the school action categories is more variable and often unsatisfactory. Although their difficulties are made known to subject teaching staff through individual education plans, there is an inconsistent level of awareness of how best to provide the most effective teaching strategies for them.

### Sixth form

25. Thirty eight sixth-form lessons were inspected. The quality of teaching is good overall. It was at least satisfactory in most of the lessons inspected. It was good or better in four fifths of lessons: just under a half were good and just under a third were very good. Two lessons were outstanding.

26. Teaching, during the inspection, is very good in art, history, geography and leisure and recreation, and usually good in other subjects. The exceptions are in mathematics and ICT where it is satisfactory. An adult atmosphere pervades the best classes. A notable approach to learning in these lessons is the emphasis on producing evidence and justifying points of view, with both teachers and students prepared to answer questions about the basis and validity of their judgements. As a result of the knowledgeable and encouraging teaching that sixth formers generally experience, most make good progress in their studies.

27. Sixth formers rate the teaching they receive very highly. They believe they receive teaching from subject experts who challenge their minds and provide interesting tasks. Most value the way their work is assessed and the careful guidance they receive on it. Although independence in learning is encouraged, students do not make sufficient use of the school library. All respondents said that they enjoy being a sixth former in this school - a very powerful endorsement.

## Assessment

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good practice in geography enables good progress.
- Good practice in art, business education, design and technology, history and travel and tourism.
- Students in music in Years 7 to 9 do not understand how to improve.
- Students in the sixth form receive very good feedback from teachers.
- The central system in the sixth form has weaknesses in data handling.

28. Procedures for assessing students' work and progress are satisfactory overall. All departments use the school data appropriately to assess students constructively. Practice in geography is very good. Assessment in citizenship is at a very early stage of development. All departments know what students have achieved recently, and base their plans securely on this information. Very good practice exists in geography, history and businesses education. Students' understanding of how well they are doing is at least satisfactory in all subjects. In the sixth form, in individual subjects, students feel they understand the criteria by which they will be assessed, and they receive very good written and oral feedback from teachers.

### Sixth form

29. The central system in the sixth form is not linked together sufficiently, for academic, attendance and pastoral records to be easily accessed to predict targets and to check on progress. Procedures for assessment are satisfactory, and have the potential to improve.

30. The assessment of students' work is accurately effected. Students who were asked clearly understood the criteria by which their work was judged. Feedback on work, both written and oral, helps students to understand the quality aimed for and how to improve. In the best lessons students are constantly being asked to reflect and to make judgements in terms of the objectives outlined by their teachers.

## The curriculum

### Curriculum

The school provides a **good** curriculum. There are **good** opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for work-related learning is very good.
- The curriculum is accessible to all and provides good opportunities for all students.
- The curriculum fulfils statutory requirements for all subjects.
- Provision for the students' personal, social and health education is good.
- The curriculum arrangements for students with special needs are good.
- There is insufficient allocation of time for religious education in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form.

## Commentary

31. The curriculum is well matched to the needs of the students. There is a good focus on courses related to the world of work which is complemented by careers education introduced in Years 7 to 9. Opportunities for students are extended effectively through good links with other institutions. These provide more flexibility in students' choice of courses in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Many of these courses have a vocational slant, but the school also offers many opportunities for students in sports and arts. Increased flexibility in Years 10 and 11 has been provided by a newly incorporated option for students to study vocational NVQ courses at a local college one afternoon per week. This year, fifteen Year 10 students have just started studying hairdressing, beauty, electronics, plumbing and a SKIDZ motor vehicle maintenance course. As the course only began very recently it is impossible to make a judgement about their attainment at present. However, students appreciate the opportunity to do something different that will help them with their future careers, and to spend some time studying out of the school environment. . Citizenship and personal social and health education are taught as discrete subjects in Years 7 to 9. These are built upon in Years 10 and 11 by the use of activity days. The curriculum is considerably enriched by an extensive programme of educational visits, extra-curricular activities, particularly in the arts and sports, and various learning activities outside the school day

32. Students with special educational needs are well provided for. This is very good within the special needs department, but inconsistent in subject departments where not all teachers are aware of the best way to adjust work and teaching strategies to meet the needs of these students. The department is appropriately located at the heart of the school and here every child can find sympathetic and informed provision in accordance with his or her need. This takes the form of either one, or all of small group or individual withdrawal lessons, a dedicated learning support assistant for students with statements of special need, and informed special provision by subject staff in many lessons. Subject provision is good in art, design and technology, geography, music and physical education, and satisfactory in other subjects. The school complies fully with the requirements of the new Code of Practice.

33. Good provision for sixth form students with special educational needs was seen in art and ICT. (See the sixth form annexe for information about the curricular provision in the sixth form.)

34. Accommodation overall is satisfactory and allows the school to teach its planned curriculum. The accommodation for music and modern languages is very good and good for food studies but the remaining specialist rooms in design and technology are in need of renovation and upgrading. The school is in urgent need of the planned new sports hall and extra space, as the school is over its capacity. Although the buildings are kept in good order by an efficient school keeping staff much of the accommodation is in need of refurbishment. The quality of resources is satisfactory. Most departments have adequate resources to support their programmes of study. However many of the computers are old and need replacing. The design and technology department is rapidly recovering from a period of under-investment but there is a need for further improvement. The main library is adequately resourced but insufficient use is made of the facility. Overall, staffing is satisfactory. In an affluent area with high house prices, the school struggles to recruit teachers and learning support assistants. As a result, a number of posts across the



departments are filled by newly qualified, non-specialist or unqualified staff. Senior managers recognise the potential impact of this on students' achievement and give good support to these staff, and the staff who mentor them, to minimise any disruption to students' learning. There are good opportunities for training and professional development for all members of the school's staff.

### Care, guidance and support

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. Students are provided with **good** support, advice and guidance. There are **good** opportunities for students to express their views about the school.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school cares very well for all its students.
- The pastoral system supports students well.
- The use of form tutor time is variable in quality and its consistency is not sufficiently monitored.
- Students are given good academic support, although the marking of their work is too often not helpful.
- Very good induction arrangements mean that Year 7 students settle in quickly.

### Commentary

35. The school continues to be the caring place described at the last inspection. Procedures for health, safety, child protection and monitoring the welfare of students in public care are very well established and managed. The school works very effectively with outside support agencies involved in students' care. Senior managers, including heads of year, know the students very well, monitor their behaviour and attendance effectively and provide very good continuity of care and support for students. Students who are unwell or upset are well cared for by the matron. Most parents are very pleased with the care provided for their children, particularly when they need support through personal and family crises. While a few parents are concerned that poor behaviour is not always managed well, most agree that any bullying is dealt with promptly.

36. The school has recently altered its pastoral support structure to provide each year group with a head of year. This change is being managed well by members of the senior leadership team with a clear emphasis on strengthening the support, advice and guidance available to each student. Most tutors use their time with students well to set expectations, for example, for homework and attendance and to allow opportunities for thoughtful discussion and reflection. However, this provision is variable and there has not yet been enough time for senior managers and heads of year to monitor the quality of tutor time across all year groups. Some students are concerned that they are not known well enough by their tutors because of frequent staffing changes.

37. The school's academic review days, while not popular with many parents, offer students good opportunities to discuss their progress with staff and to set themselves personal targets to work towards in order to improve their work. Students speak positively of the 'ladder' system for assessing their work and appreciate the use of merits to recognise improvement and achievement. However, they also report that marking of their

work varies in quality between subjects and they are not always given as much guidance as they would like on how to improve their work. Students are provided with good advice and guidance, in association with Connexions, when making choices about careers or future studies.

38. Induction procedures for students who are new to the school in Year 7 are very good and result in them settling down quickly to school routines. Very good liaison with feeder primary schools by the head of Year 7 and the special educational needs co-ordinator means that the school has good information about each individual student before they arrive at the school and is able to put in the necessary support. Year 7 students say that the two induction days prior to them starting were extremely helpful in helping them to get to know staff and to find their way around.

39. At break and lunchtimes the special educational needs department provides an informal "sanctuary" for any students who might find that social interaction with their peers is a strain. On occasions school refusers have been successfully reintegrated into some subject lessons because of the care provided by the special needs department.

### **Sixth form**

40. The quality of support, advice and guidance offered to students in the sixth form is good. The strength of the support is in the knowledge that teachers have of students and, in many cases, of their families. However, the monitoring of students' attendance is inadequate. Students are very positive about the sixth form and feel well supported because there is always someone to whom they can turn with any problems. They particularly appreciate the advice that they receive about what to do when they leave the school.

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

There is a **good** partnership with parents. The school makes **good** use of the wider community and partnerships outside the school. Links with other schools and colleges are **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents like the school, as evidenced in the rising numbers of students.
- The school provides parents with very good quality information.
- There is good involvement with the local community to extend students' learning.

## **Commentary**

41. Parents think that this is a good school and particularly praise the extra activities on offer to their children, such as musical productions, sports, revision classes and opportunities for younger and older students to work together. They say that the school is a friendly, caring place and it has good links with them, for example, their comments in homework diaries are responded to well. The school regularly consults parents through surveys and acts positively on their views. It is well supported by its parent governors and has a very active parent, teacher, friends association which raises funds and brings the local community into the school, for example at its regular art fairs and fun runs.

42. Overall, the school provides parents with very good information. Students' reports are a particularly good and helpful feature of this provision. They are free from educational jargon. Reports clearly indicate students' achievement against expected national curriculum levels or predicted grades, the students' attitudes to work and the targets set for them in order to improve. There is a very good range of information evenings, workshops and revision clinics for all year groups, to which parents are invited. The school recognises the desire of parents to be even more involved in their children's learning at home and is seeking to improve its communication with them further, through a new website.

43. The school places good importance on developing its links with the local community and using these to broaden students' learning and experiences outside school. Participation in, for example, the Mayor's Youth Award, the Festival of Lights, Youth Speaks, services at the local church and charity fundraising contribute very well to students' social development. The business community supports the school well through its provision for work experience placements, for example at a local hotel. The school is keen that its successes are widely known and uses the press effectively to celebrate students' achievements.

44. The school has good links with primary schools through its liaison group and its induction processes. Older students have the opportunity to work with staff and younger students to run a Year 6 sports day for local primary schools. There are strong links with the student referral unit which supports students with behaviour problems well through its outreach service and provision of placements.

45. Parents and carers of students with special educational needs are fully involved in the writing of targets for individual education plans, and are always invited to review meetings, both formal and informal.

## **Sixth form**

46. The home-school partnership is as effective in the sixth form as it is in the main school. Parents are very supportive of the work of the sixth form and are fully involved in any discussions concerning the progress and future aspirations of their children. There are also good links with the local and wider community. Sixth form performing arts students perform to students from both primary schools and a local special school.

47. The range of subjects and courses available to students is extended by having access to courses provided by other secondary schools and further education colleges, which are not available within their own sixth form. Links with these providers are good.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. Leadership by the headteacher and senior management team is **very good**. Management is **effective**. Governance is **good**. The school does not meet statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher maintains a very positive approach despite shortages in budget and staffing.
- A vocational and work related direction is clearly emphasised by leaders.
- The middle management is considerably stronger than at the time of the previous inspection.
- The well structured school development plan is not sufficiently long term.
- Financial control is frustrated by the lack of current data from the county.

## **Commentary**

48. The headteacher is a very good leader. She has a clear understanding of what she requires and pursues an impressive sense of purpose with resolve. Her commitment to improving teaching and learning has been frustrated by staffing difficulties but her positivity has diminished such barriers. Together with her senior management team, she visualises a school with more vocational and work related learning provision. All work tirelessly to achieve this aim. All leaders and managers work hard to raise students' self esteem. The ethos of equality of opportunity, the importance of the individual and the demonstrably very good role models ensure that each student has a good quality of education.

49. The quality of leadership by middle managers has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Many new heads of department are well established already. There is very good leadership and management in business, art, design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages. Leadership is very good in religious education. Heads of year perform their duties well; they contribute well to the positive ethos that pervades the school.

50. The school development plan is a substantial, well conceived document. It is ratified by governors and is reviewed regularly. However, it lacks a stratagem beyond 2005.

51. The governing body is a highly committed group which supports well the school's purpose to raise aspirations through improved teaching and learning. It is very well led. The group draws on a wide range of skills from members, who come from industry, business, health, finance and education. A strong core is highly effective. A clear committee structure ensures that all aspects of school are given adequate attention. The governors receive substantial training to improve self-evaluation techniques. They work well with the headteacher, whom they rate highly and the senior management team, who, they feel, have coped well during recent staffing difficulties. Mainly they know their statutory duties but have not met the requirement to ensure that students have a daily act of collective worship.

52. Financial control is as secure as it can be given various factors. Computer problems at county level mean that the whole picture is not always clear. The bursar, who is extremely competent and careful, is handicapped by the current lack of data being provided by the county. Governors too are frustrated by this data absence. A good, governors finance committee tries very hard to do the very best job they can. Auditors report good working practices although there are some very recent recommendations that require action. The good quality of education, mostly good teaching and learning combined with a good curriculum, contribute to the good value for money the school offers.

## **Financial information**

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,654,445
Total expenditure	2,669,277
Expenditure per student	3,337

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	(87,966)
Balance carried forward to the next	(102,798)

53. The special educational needs department is very well led and managed by a very experienced and hard-working co-ordinator. She manages very effectively a team of 16 learning support assistants, being responsible for their induction and professional development, as well as for their deployment in the school. She also conducts in-service training sessions for subject staff about providing for special needs students in the classroom, and more of these are planned. There are systems for the close monitoring of the progress of all the students on the school's list of special educational needs and these are all up to date. Liaison is very good with outside agencies. Very strong and well informed support is given by the governor designated as responsible for special education needs. Although all these strands are very well integrated, there is insufficient provision of time for the co-ordinator to be able to have a full overview of the work of the department.

### **Sixth form**

54. The leadership of the sixth form is very good and its management is good. A very positive feature of the leadership is the wide range of academic and vocational courses offered which have raised students' aspirations. Collaboration with the nearby high school has furthered these possibilities. A good feature of the management is the regular meeting with and monitoring of the work of heads of department. Too few links have been established between the sixth form students and those in the main school. Attendance records are not easily accessible by teachers and procedures are not rigorous enough. The sixth form is increasing in numbers at such a rate that it has outgrown its present accommodation. It is very cost effective and provides good value for money.

## **What is the effectiveness of Work Related Learning**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The work experience award scheme encourages high standards.
- The good guidance and support given to students raises standards in the workplace.
- There is good practice in monitoring and assessing student experiences.
- Well produced guidance booklets help students work with more independence.
- Teachers are committed to ensuring students achieve their full potential.
- There is inadequate provision and use of computers.

### **Commentary**

55. In Years 7 to 9 careers, with the help of Connexions, is introduced to students. Vocational education forms a vital and effective part of the school's provision. Students have two weeks work experience in Year 10 as part of the work related learning programme. Students following some AVCE courses post-16 also have work placements. Year 11 students have a mock interview with local business people in partnership with the local Rotary group. These inputs are very good and aid learning. A growing number of students take a vocational course. There is a GNVQ (Intermediate) level course in health and social care. The curriculum includes an advanced AVCE in 'Business,' 'Health and Social Care' and 'Performing Arts' amongst others. The guidance and support cover dynamic discussion and the effective sharing of ideas to improve the quality and efficiency of work experience and learning. The vocational programme enhances and broadens the school curriculum. Work related learning is to be found in SPACE (social, personal and citizenship education). It is not taught as a discrete subject. It is taught as activity sessions or conferences. This works well and it is popular with students at all levels. Well balanced and innovative programmes are offered. The curriculum is socially inclusive. All students have equality of access and are fully prepared for a successful work experience.

56. The most recent work experience awards gained are above average. Since students who enter for these awards often have low self-esteem their performance represents good achievement. Many students win silver and gold awards and go through to the County Awards Scheme. These awards provide evidence to prospective employers and colleges of the quality of work. Standards are, overall, above average. In all areas guidance, support and learning are good. A number of local employers are involved. As a result, the quality of most students' work is good. The provision for work related learning and work experience is good. There is a natural extension of the good practice found in all aspects of business education. Much of the work takes account of the changes in the working environment of which some students are shortly to be a part. In past years, the Educational Business Partnership and the Careers Service have made additional awards to students who have made exceptional achievement during their work experience.

57. The integration of the key skills of communication, number and ICT is a major reason for the good progress of these students. Over time students achieve well. Students are taught about the choices they face at work. They are shown how to make a contribution to an industrialised, highly technological society. Most students gain in the

skill of understanding enterprise and wealth creation and some develop entrepreneurial skills. The higher attainers show good analytical, personal and social skills.

58. Vocational programmes are led and managed well. The planning and care shown by teachers contribute significantly to effective learning experiences. Assessment, target setting and monitoring of students' progress are processes that are valued and contribute to the high standards achieved.



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

### **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4.**

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

##### **English**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

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

- Many boys in Years 10 and 11 make insufficient progress in their learning, and achieve well below average grades in their final English examinations.
- Good teaching in the subject results in good learning and achievement for many students.
- The literacy strand of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy is used well to extend students' learning, knowledge and understanding in Years 7 to 9.
- Work is not always sufficiently matched to meet the needs and abilities of all students in the set classes in Years 7 to 9.
- The library is not used sufficiently as a resource for learning and reading for pleasure.

##### **Commentary**

59. Attainment upon entry into the school in all aspects of English is just below average. Because of good teaching and an imaginative curriculum, students make good progress over time, with the result that standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with expectations for students' ages. This was reflected in the 2003 statutory test results, when standards were in line with the national average and in comparison to similar schools. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. The majority of students continue to sustain good progress and achievement in Years 10 and 11, with many students, in particular girls, achieving satisfactory results in their GCSE examinations. A number of boys however have low aspirations and are not prepared to take control of their own learning or really stretch themselves. This was reflected in the overall below average GCSE English language results in 2003, though standards are better when compared to other secondary modern schools. Standards improved in 2004. More able students who are entered for GCSE English literature achieve results in line with the national average.

60. Most students in Years 7 to 9 display satisfactory speaking and listening skills. The majority of students listen with interest to their teachers and are willing to make active contribution to oral activities. Many students continue to display satisfactory oral skills in Years 10 and 11, though a number of students become more self-conscious and are less willing to share their ideas, opinions and feelings in anything like a formal situation. Speaking and listening skills in Years 9 and 11 are average.

61. Most students in school have satisfactory technical reading skills. A number of students in Years 7 to 9, however, have a below average vocabulary and are insecure in their reading comprehension skills, with the result that they do not always fully appreciate and understand the texts that they read.

62. Although reading skills are well taught in Years 10 and 11, many students have problems in understanding the layers of meaning in the demanding texts which form part of their GCSE studies. They have problems in appreciating how different poets, authors and playwrights use language to convey tone, imagery and atmosphere.

63. Many students have poor reading habits and rarely read books, other than those being studied at school. As a result standards in reading at 14 and 16 are below average.

64. Students develop necessary basic English skills in Years 7 to 9 and use them in a good range of writing activities, which allow them to write for different purposes, and in different styles. Written work is average by the time students are in Year 9, with the most able of students producing some good quality factual materials and imaginative essays.

65. Standards in written work vary significantly in Years 10 and 11. A number of able students write essays of a good length. They make a personal response to the questions asked of them and produce well reasoned arguments supported by evidence from the text and relevant quotations. In contrast, a number of average and lower attaining students write only about the events and characters in the texts they read and have problems in writing about ideas, issues and themes. The scrutiny of students' written work reveals that a significant number of boys only put a limited amount of effort into their work. This results in incomplete coursework and essays that are short in length and superficial in detail. As a result, standards at 16 are below average, and for many boys, well below average.

66. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed. Teachers use the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy in an effective manner in lessons, with evidence in the scrutiny of work that it is making a positive contribution to improving standards. Whilst teachers provide students with a good range of interesting writing activities in Years 7 to 9, they are generally the same for all students in the set classes, with students using the same worksheets and writing frames. This can result in lower attaining students and those for whom English is an additional language being uncertain how to carry out the activity they are involved in and with more able members of the class being inappropriately challenged.

67. Leadership and management in English are good. In the very short time she has been in post the Head of English has introduced a good range of documentation, including revised schemes of work to support teachers in the delivery of the subject. She is aware of the issue of poor achievement by boys in Years 10 and 11 and is addressing this issue through the introduction of a more student-friendly GCSE syllabus. The department has involved itself with a number of local and national strategies to help raise standards in the subject. The department has recently introduced new assessment and tracking procedures, though students do not have individual medium-term targets for improvement.

68. Although accommodation and resources for the subject are adequate, the library is insufficiently used as a resource for learning and reading for pleasure; consequently students miss an important opportunity to learn independently. Standards in the subject are broadly the same as at the time of the last inspection.

## **Modern foreign languages**

Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management of the department are very good with satisfactory outcomes.
- A few students do not respond positively to high expectations.

### **Commentary**

69. The proportion of students attaining grades A\*-C in the GCSE examinations in 2003 in French and German was significantly below the national average for all maintained schools. Boys were well below the national average in both languages, and the difference between the performance of boys and girls in the school was higher than that seen nationally. Students performed better in most other subjects than in languages. A high turnover of teachers and curriculum leaders had an adverse effect on students' attainment and continuity. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 showed a rising trend in each language. In 2004, teachers' assessments of students' work at the end of Year 9 showed significant improvement over the previous year.

70. Students' current standards of attainment, as seen in Year 9, are average in French and German. Students' understanding of the foreign language is good. Teachers use it consistently to challenge students. Frequent opportunities to speak are provided by reciting in chorus and by speaking in pairs. Pronunciation is satisfactory, and sometimes good. When wrong, it is corrected by teachers. Students write at an appropriate level.

71. Students' current standards of attainment in French and German in Year 11 are average. A sound knowledge of topic vocabulary enabled students in French to identify successfully places heard on cassette. A good knowledge of words and phrases enabled students in German to talk about measures that help or hinder our environment. Accuracy in students' written work varies. It is satisfactory overall.

72. Achievement for most students in each language is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Over time, students acquire the necessary vocabulary, relevant structures and tenses which enable them to complete different tasks, for example in producing coursework in Years 10 and 11. Students receive a thorough grounding in grammar, and teachers contribute well to the development of students' literacy. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, and they receive good support from learning assistants.

73. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 in French and German, but good in Years 10 and 11, where students are better motivated. Overall, it is satisfactory. Teachers are keen and enthusiastic: two of the three teachers are native speakers, and all teachers use the foreign language well in class. Lessons begin with a formal greeting, and students are made aware of the learning objectives. Lessons are planned well, to involve different activities and skills. Resources are used well to revise work or to introduce new material. Vocabulary and phrases are consolidated by reciting in chorus or by students working in pairs. However, occasionally teachers do not challenge students individually or ask students to present the pair work to the class for the teacher to assess. Homework is set regularly, and marking is satisfactory.

74. Leadership and management are very good. Students' attitudes to learning are generally good, but some students, usually boys, either do not conform to teachers' requiring good presentation of written work, do not work productively enough in class or they do not respond positively to comments on their written work. Work on display is of a high standard. Improvement has been good recently and since the last inspection.

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

Provision in literacy across the curriculum is **satisfactory**.

75. Following on from a thorough audit of provision in 2003 all members of the school were involved a full day's training on literacy across the curriculum. Teachers derived benefit from a general introduction to literacy skills, with a focus on the use of key words and the use of writing frames to support students in their writing skills. These issues are incorporated in department handbooks and referred to in teachers' planning documents. Literacy is generally developed in a satisfactory manner across the school, with it being well promoted in history, geography, religious education and modern foreign languages.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

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

- The new leadership is good, focusing on raising standards.
- The standard of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good overall.
- GCSE results are well below average.
- Short-term planning, assessment and recording procedures are not rigorous enough to support learning.
- Irregular teaching assistant support restricts the progress of lower attaining students.
- ICT provision is inadequate and impacts negatively on standards.

#### **Commentary**

76. Results at the end of Year 9, 2003 were below average but compared with similar schools, the number of students reaching the expected and higher levels was above average. In 2004, the results gained at the end of Year 9 were better overall. The 2003 and 2004 GCSE results were well below average. However the standards of work seen in lessons and in the books of students in all years were in line with national expectations. Students are currently making good progress in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11.

77. In Years 7 to 9, students show increasing confidence and competence in all areas of mathematics but the presentation of their work is not consistently orderly or well presented though satisfactory overall. As they proceed through the first three years, students extend their knowledge of number, shape and handling data. They become adept at managing fractions, decimals and percentages. They do a variety of practical exercises to help them understand geometry and much of this work is proudly displayed. The students are introduced to algebra and many of them learn how to solve algebraic equations. However in some classes students are not given enough opportunity to practice the skills of

manipulating equations. Students in Year 10 have made good progress since they began the GCSE course in September. The current Year 11 students are presently following revised schemes of work designed to help them achieve higher grades in 2005. The students following higher and intermediate GCSE courses are developing higher-level numerical skills and have a good understanding of more demanding algebra. They extend their geometrical skills including those of trigonometry and they enjoy problem solving. The students studying foundation GCSE gain confidence and some look forward to beginning work at the intermediate level.

78. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good overall. Most lessons begin with imaginative starters, which serve to revise previous work or to prime the students' minds for new work. Where teaching is good, lessons are well planned, learning objectives clear and students work briskly through a variety of challenging tasks, which are well matched to their abilities. In very good lessons, teaching is more imaginative and students are given opportunities to collaborate. They enjoy their lessons and leave with a sense of achievement. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is variable but satisfactory overall. It was very good in Year 11 classes studying data handling. Many of the students rose to the challenges presented and were successful. While satisfactory teaching resulted in students achieving their lessons' objectives, the rate of students' progress was not as great as it might have been. Teaching that was less than good reflected insufficient planning or assessment so that the work set did not match the students' levels of understanding or was repetitive and unchallenging.

79. Students who find mathematics difficult are taught in smaller groups and in some lessons they benefit from the additional support of teaching assistants. However, this support is not regularly available and few teachers plan the assistants' deployment well enough. Students who have reached a higher standard are taught together so that they experience greater challenge and work at a faster pace. In their contribution to literacy development, teachers explain the meaning of key words. The department's contribution to the students' personal development is merely incidental, opportunities are often missed to address their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to increase their appreciation of citizenship.

80. Students do not use ICT often enough to support their learning in mathematics because there are too few computers in the classrooms and access to the school's computer suite is restricted. The stairwells to the curriculum area, its corridors and classrooms are in a poor state of decoration and repair and are dirty. Despite the teachers' efforts to make attractive displays of students' work to celebrate their efforts, the area does not provide an inviting work environment for teachers or students.

81. The new head of department is providing good leadership. He is supportive of his colleagues and establishing good teamwork, which is calculated to ensure good management. Having analysed test and examination data, he has a clear vision for the department's development and his focus is on raising standards. He has already made critical changes to the curriculum to help students gain higher GCSE grades. His other key priority is monitoring, to effect improved teaching and learning. New schemes of work focus adequately on the quality of learning, addressing lesson organisation, in-lesson assessment and recording as well as planning to support students' personal development. Medium-term assessment test results in Years 7 to 9 are already used well to track students' progress and will now be extended to Years 10 and 11. All test results will be

used to help students to set themselves learning targets and to inform teachers of adjustments they should make in their teaching, to meet the needs of the students.

82. The recent development work, the dedication of the teachers and the determination of the head of department augurs well for the future.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

The students' competence in mathematics is generally **satisfactory**.

83. In science, design and technology and physical education, the students' numeracy skills are applied well to collect and interpret data, to take measurements and perform calculations. However, some science teachers assume that students in lower attaining groups have mastered basic calculation skills, but often they have not. In ICT lessons, students prepare spreadsheets for the management of data. Students frequently analyse data in history and geography. Their mathematical skills are applied very well in art lessons. In the new GCSE business studies course, mathematics is used extensively and well. In data analysis, students look for correlations and understand significant numbers. In book keeping, they deal well with debits and credits and show good appreciation of financial accounting.

84. The mathematics department recognises the need to establish a consistent approach to teaching certain topics and to identify areas where topics are being addressed in another subject, so as to avoid duplicating the teaching.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**

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

- Teaching is good, so students learn well.
- Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9.
- Students' target setting and use of self evaluation is not developed in Years 10 and 11.
- The needs of gifted and talented students are not always addressed.
- Students' use of ICT to support learning in experimental work is insufficient.

#### **Commentary**

85. The 2003 national test results for Year 9 were in line with national standards. They were above average when compared with similar schools. The results have improved since the last inspection and the rate of improvement has exceeded the national rate. The results for 2004 are in line with those gained the previous year. The 2003 GCSE results for Year 11 were below average. This year's results are similar and results have stayed around this level since the last inspection.

86. The standard of work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 was average. Top set Year 9 students understand how the force acting on an object affects its acceleration but have difficulty in using symbols to represent reactants in chemical equations. Lower set Year 9 students are able to apply a simple formula to calculate speed, but often make

mistakes with the arithmetic. The standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 was below average. Top set Year 10 students are able to calculate electrical resistance using a simple formula but are not confident in their understanding of the concept of electrical resistance. Lower set Year 10 students know the dangers of electricity but do not understand the purpose of a fuse or earth wire. Generally, students' grasp of mathematical and literacy skills present few problems in their scientific learning.

87. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9. They enter the school with below average attainment overall and reach average standards by the end of Year 9. However, they achieve less well in Years 10 and 11, obtaining grades lower than would be expected based upon their national test scores at the end of Year 9. Students with special educational needs achieve very well, but those students identified as having special gifts or talents often underachieve.

88. Teaching is good and students achieve well in lessons. Most of the teaching seen was satisfactory and at least half was good. Only a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching has improved well since the last inspection. Teachers plan their lessons well and demonstrate good subject knowledge. They insist on good behaviour and keep students on task. Teaching is most effective when the teacher has high expectations of students' achievement and plans opportunities for students to learn independently and from each other. By using a variety of learning styles the teachers ensure that students achieve well. In less successful teaching students are not sufficiently engaged due to the nature and appropriateness of the task, back up plans for resource problems are not always in place and classroom management is less effective. Teachers assess students' work well in Years 7 to 9. Students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. In Years 10 and 11 students' target setting and self evaluation is not used effectively enough. Consequently students do not progress as much as they should. Teachers plan the work appropriately to ensure that students' special educational needs are met, but little extra provision is made for students who are gifted and talented. Numeracy and literacy needs are addressed satisfactorily but ICT is not used by students to support learning in experimental science. Students generally behave well, but a small number of them sometimes disrupt the learning of others.

89. The leadership and management of science are satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection. The head of department has a clear vision for raising achievement in Years 10 and 11 and this is shared by a committed team of teachers, laboratory technicians and support staff. This vision is reflected in well focused departmental plans, action plans and departmental handbook. The head of department and most of the teaching staff have only been in post for one or two years and achievement has improved in Years 10 and 11, but this has yet to translate into improved GCSE results. The department is managed effectively on a day to day basis. Schemes of work are in place and students' progress is monitored well over time. The monitoring of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Resources are satisfactory but students' access to ICT facilities is too limited to impact positively on standards. Laboratory accommodation is unsatisfactory. Laboratories are too small for large groups engaged in practical work and the generally elongated layout of some laboratories presents some communication difficulties for teachers.

## **Information and communication technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students in Year 9 and those in Year 11 who take GCSE are achieving well.
- Specialist ICT teaching and learning are good.
- Old and unreliable equipment adversely affects teaching and learning in ICT lessons and in other subjects across the curriculum.
- On occasions, poor behaviour and attitudes affect teaching and learning.
- Specialist ICT provision is well managed; it has a positive effect on students' achievement.

### **Commentary**

90. Standards of work in Year 9 are rising significantly. Many students are on track to reach nationally expected levels by the end of the year, an improvement on previous years. Changes in the GCSE examination syllabus led to disappointing results in 2004, but at the time of the inspection the school was awaiting the result of remarking. It is not possible, therefore, to make secure judgements about students' achievement in the past. Students currently in Year 11 are on course to reach average GCSE standards overall. Although few students are expected to reach higher levels of attainment in Year 9 and at GCSE, their performance nevertheless represents good achievement, because most students start at the school with below average standards in ICT.

91. Led well by the head of department, the small team of specialist teachers has implemented effectively the ICT elements of the National Strategy for students in Years 7 to 9. Lessons are a good mix of class or group discussion and individual practical work at the computers. Students have ample opportunities to work to the best of their ability and to show what they can do. For example, 'About Me' multimedia presentations in Year 7 include a good range of special effects and are attractively presented. A few of the students' own evaluations of work are good, for example: 'use of pictures is very good except on the first slide. The cat is not needed here'. However, many students find it hard to express their ideas clearly in writing.

92. Teachers and technicians work hard to maintain the computer network and to ensure its smooth running. However, much of the equipment is at the end of its useful life. Teachers sometimes have to use inappropriate software to meet course requirements because newer software does not always run correctly on the old computers. For example, students designing pages for a school website had difficulty in organising text and pictures where they wanted them on the screen because the programme used was primarily not designed for this purpose. This makes teaching and learning harder than it should be. Network breakdowns affect teaching in some lessons. They take the teacher away from working with individual students and contribute to pockets of poor behaviour, as frustrations grow.

93. Support staff work well with individuals or small groups of students with special educational needs. These students achieve as well as others in the class. Most students behave well, but small groups of students with challenging behaviour disrupt lessons at times, making it hard for the teacher to teach effectively. This affects not only their own progress but also that of others in the class.

94. Expectations about what is needed to achieve low, middle and high grades at GCSE are made very clear to students in Years 10 and 11 as they tackle each new unit of work. This is good guidance. It enables students to judge their own progress and is a contributory factor in the good achievement seen so far. It also reflects the hard work and good planning of the ICT manager in breaking down the course into its smaller units, as the new GCSE course becomes more firmly established. Leadership and management of



the subject are good. The breadth of the ICT curriculum offers satisfactory provision. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

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

95. Planning for ICT across the curriculum has improved since the last inspection. All aspects of the National Curriculum now receive sufficient attention. ICT is an integral part of the GCSE business studies course and students taking technology subjects make good use of ICT in the newly equipped department, for example using specialist equipment in design and manufacture of products. However, the school is under-equipped for ICT generally. Lack of regular access and the unreliability of the network hinder the use of ICT in some subjects, notably English and mathematics. Management of ICT across the whole school has recently been reorganised, with the establishment of an ICT steering group. However, it is too early to judge the effect of this reorganisation on the work of the school.

96. Planning, teaching and students' achievements have all improved significantly since the last inspection. However, long-standing concerns about ICT resources are only now being addressed. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Students achieve well due to good teaching.
- GCSE results are above those of similar schools and above the average of other subjects in the school representing good achievement.
- Students' attitudes and application are very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Assessment of students' work and tracking of their progress are very good.
- Provision for students of all levels of attainment is good.
- There is not enough access to ICT resources.

#### **Commentary**

97. GCSE results in 2003 were above the average for similar schools. The proportion of students gaining grades A\* to C was below the national average for all schools, but the proportion attaining grades A\* to G was in line with the average. Results were significantly above the average of other subjects in the school. Girls' results are higher than boys, though the gap is narrowing and in 2003 was not greater than the national gap. Results in 2004 were in line with those of the previous year.

98. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average and this represents good achievement from students' standards on entry to the school. By Year 9 the strongest students have gained a good understanding about the world environment and can describe and explain the principles of world climates and the causes and effects of volcanoes and earthquakes. Lower attaining students can describe these phenomena, but are less certain of the causes and effects. The majority of students are good at mapwork and can produce very clear and careful drawings and diagrams. Most write well, because literacy is emphasised in all

lessons, and every opportunity is taken to develop numeracy, for example by using graphs and map co-ordinates.

99. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average overall, though some students are working to above average standards. This represents good achievement. Year 11 students showed a very good understanding of how coastal features are formed and Year 10 students have produced some very good work on urban development. The books of these students are so well kept and their presentation is of such a high standard that it was a pleasure to read their work. They use ICT well to support their homework and coursework, though class access is often restricted because there are no dedicated departmental facilities. All cross-curricular aspects are catered for, but citizenship elements are not made explicit in the lessons.

100. Students with special educational needs make good progress because they are planned for separately in every lesson through targeted questioning and, where appropriate, simplified work. Liaison between teachers and learning support assistants is good.

101. Teaching and learning are good, with some very good teaching seen and none that was unsatisfactory. Planning was thorough and most lessons moved forward at a fast pace, using interesting resources. In Years 8 and 9 the behaviour of a few students threatened to disrupt the learning of others, but the teachers managed this very well, insisting on silence and application to work so that the lessons could proceed in good order. In Years 10 and 11 attitudes were very good. Students were keen to learn and recognised the value of what they were being taught, though opportunities were missed for students to think for themselves rather than listen to the teacher.

102. Assessment of learning is good. All work is marked with clear guidance for improvement and teachers are skilled at assessing learning in lessons through questioning, which often targets individual students. Comprehensive student tracking sheets are in use, so that the progress of every student is recorded well.

103. The department is well led and managed by a head of department who has only been in post for a few weeks. She is fully aware of the future needs of the department and has already started to work to improve the departmental documentation. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, with better teaching and learning and higher standards of attainment. The capacity for further improvement under the new management is very good.

## **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good achievement across all years results from good teaching.
- Learning and study skills are developed from Years 7 to 13.
- Independence of students is helping them to pursue their own lines of enquiry.
- Insufficient use of ICT in classrooms affects standards negatively.

## **Commentary**

104. The most recent results, at the end of Year 9, were in line or above the national average. Many students enter Year 7 with average scores. This represents good progress.

105. GCSE results, in 2003 for students gaining A\* to C, were in line with national averages. The proportion gaining grades A\*-G, were above the national average. In 2004 all results were above the national average. Girls performed better than boys. All make good gains. Predicted grades for current Year 11 students indicate that an increase of grades A\* to C should occur.

106. The A-level history results are below the national average for grades A - B. They are in line for grades A-E. Students achieve well from their GCSE starting points. The awards indicate substantial gains. A sample of Years 12 and 13 work was satisfactory overall. The work produced by the higher attaining students is good. Students can write clearly but not always in sufficient depth.

107. Standards at all levels have risen significantly. Students with special educational needs and gifted and talented students both do well in history. Achievement and progress are good over time. There is value added in all the results obtained over the last three years. Girls do outperform boys in history although not significantly so.

108. The work of students at the end of Years 9 and 11 show that most students reach average standards. Progress is good over time and this is in part due to the positive attitudes of most students to their work. This was illustrated by an entertaining Year 7 class who described in detail what it would be like to visit Pompeii. Higher attaining students reach above average standards in both their oral and written work. Although some students work well independently, others are over-reliant on their teachers to provide them with information.

109. The work of students in Year 9 shows a significant number reaching average standards. From Year 7 most students use history vocabulary with increasing confidence. Too few students make enough use of ICT while in school. A few lower attaining boys in Years 7 to 9 do not work fast enough or show sufficient pride in their written work. A Year 10 lesson on Roman medicine, however, stimulated fresh explanations from girls and a few boys. The work from a small number of students was not penetrating or tidy.

110. In Year 11 many students demonstrate steady progression in knowledge and skills. They develop their understanding of how the past is investigated. They arrive at good judgements by learning to analyse evidence from many sources. The higher attaining students demonstrate good levels of recall, although a few struggle to express what they know to their best advantage.

111. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Very good teaching was observed. Teaching materials are well prepared. Teachers are well qualified subject specialists who use their expertise to interest and motivate students. Students learn effectively because lessons are planned and time is well used. Most sessions are taught at a brisk pace. Students are active participants in the learning process. All students receive good curriculum guidance.

112. The history department is very well led, both leadership and management are very good and the work is characterised by team work. History is monitored and outcomes are

shared. Teaching, planning lessons, marking and assessment are well checked and reported upon. Since the last inspection improvement is very good. In response to issues raised, students now progressively show awareness that there are several interpretations of past issues and events. They are prepared to undertake research and write up their findings.

## **Religious Education**

Provision in religious education is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good GCSE results in the full course examination reflect good teaching.
- The department makes a good contribution to students overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The staffing has improved since the last inspection but some aspects are still unsatisfactory.
- A lack of firm control in some classes inhibits learning.

### **Commentary**

113. No comparisons can yet be made with national averages in 2004, but the results gained by students entering for the full course GCSE appear to be well above average. Around four fifths of students gained the higher grades A\* to C. It is a new course, so no comparison can be made with previous years. For those doing the short course GCSE in 2003, the results are well below national averages. Around a fifth of students gained the higher grades A\* to C and most gained an A\* to G grade. Standards have improved in 2004, with around a third gaining A\* to C and most gaining an A\* to G. The standards seen during the inspection are mixed. For those on the full course, the standards are in line with the average and often above it.

114. Students talk with confidence about a range of issues including the central beliefs of Christianity. The students have good reasoning skills. The standards on the short course are below average. Students have knowledge and understanding of various aspects of Islam and Christianity but these are not strongly developed. Students are stronger in being able to respond on a more general level than in being able to give clear religious perspectives on the issues raised. The attainment of girls is better than that of boys. In general, students' extended writing is not strong. Overall the achievement of students is satisfactory. For those on the full course it is good. Students with special educational needs, and who have English as an additional language, make satisfactory and good progress respectively.

115. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with the average. Students can talk meaningfully about many aspects of world religions. These include prayer in Islam, attitudes to life in Buddhism, and Christian responses to issue surrounding the meaning and purpose of life. Students have good reasoning skills and they are good at making verbal responses. Their written skills are less significant. Students can use ICT effectively in their work. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Overall achievement is good. Students with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language, make satisfactory and good progress respectively.

116. Overall, teaching is good. Lessons are well prepared and have an interesting range of activities to stimulate the learning. Where the teaching is very good, the content drawn from world religions is strong and the management of the students is firm. Such positive features, combined with a fast pace, enable students to learn a lot in the time available. Where teaching is satisfactory, or in a few instances unsatisfactory, the content drawn from world religions is less strong and there is some uncertainty and lack of clarity in the presentation of the content. The objectives of the lessons are not always clear. Management of the students is significantly less firm and many lose concentration and do not make the best use of the time available. Across the teaching as a whole, the attitude and behaviour of the students is generally good, but at times insufficient is done to keep students fully engaged in their work. ICT is used for some of the learning. Homework is consistently set. Marking and assessment is carried out effectively. The teaching makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

117. Leadership is very good. Management is good. Some departmental monitoring takes place, but there is scope for significant development. There have been improvements to staffing since the last inspection. Staffing is generally satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall. The accommodation is good and the resources are very good.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and Technology**

Provision in design and technology is **good**

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

- Very good and excellent teaching in Years 10 and 11 bring about good achievement.
- Leadership and management are strong and have contributed to many improvements since the last inspection.
- The refurbishment and upgrading of some accommodation aids learning.
- Old and irrelevant equipment and tools do not match the current curriculum.
- Staff development through the dissemination of good practice is scarce.

#### **Commentary**

118. In last year's GCSE examinations, a fifth of students gained the higher grades A\*-C in resistant materials. Over a third gained A\* to C in graphics whilst over a half did in textiles and over three-quarters in food. The latter two results were around the national average.

119. Attainment in Years 7 to 9 is in line with expectations, but much good work was also seen during the inspection. Students are introduced to designing through a series of structured assignments. Throughout these years students effectively use a system of project work books which provide them with a framework within which they can personalise their work. Practical work is enjoyed and students respond positively, taking care to achieve an appropriate quality of product and presentation. There is some use of ICT and this important aspect is being further developed. Evidence of work in progress

indicates that students are making sound progress and developing a range of personal skills and interests.

120. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory but there is evidence of some good and very good work. Design project folders are generally well presented and most students take pride in developing a distinctive personal style. Students use a range of ICT skills and a variety of contexts, including manufacture. Students are beginning to develop independent study skills and they demonstrate confidence in using equipment and machinery. However, there is a small group of boys in Year 10 whose poor behaviour occasionally hinders the work of others.

121. The teaching team has experienced a number of changes and difficulties which have affected the continuity and quality of some courses in the past. However, the current team has worked hard to retrieve the situation and revitalise the department. Their commitment and industry is to be commended. Teachers provide a range of interesting assignments for their students, to which they respond positively. Teachers manage lessons well, organise learning resources and contribute to departmental targets. In a situation in which half the team is very experienced, there is an opportunity to disseminate good practice through in-house training. Team teaching is already providing its worth. The quality of teaching during the inspection was good overall; there were examples of very good and excellent teaching. Students enjoy their work and behaviour and attitudes towards study are positive. Students with special educational needs are clearly identified and supported, to enable them to achieve their potential. The atmosphere within the department is conducive to learning and the level of achievement is good. The teaching team is well supported by three experienced and competent technicians.

122. The department is led by a very effective, able and enthusiastic head of department. He is well supported by his deputy and the whole team has contributed to a substantial series of changes and improvements since the last inspection. Administrative procedures are in place and documentation is both full and detailed.

123. The quality of accommodation is variable, with food and ICT areas having very good facilities. The rest of the department is in need of upgrade and renovation. There has been underdevelopment in the past and the changing curriculum and available equipment is ill-matched. There is some shortage of textbooks, equipment and hand tools, although much improvement has taken place over the last few years. Staff have worked generously in improving the facilities, but further central investment is required.

124. Display is generally good and staff are to be congratulated on the present standard. Students gain much from the exemplar materials, both for setting standards of quality and for stimulating the flow of ideas.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and Design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards attained at GCSE level, in 2003, were well above average and represent very good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- This is an inclusive department where students' needs are fully considered.
- Both leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Accommodation is too cramped for large classes in Years 7 to 9.

## **Commentary**

125. The standard on entry to the school is average. By the end of Year 9, the overall standard in teacher assessments and work seen is above average for observational drawing, research, design and the development of ideas in two dimensions. Most Year 9 students understand Impressionist techniques and successfully work in this style of painting.

126. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard is well above average. Students recognise the importance of looking with understanding when drawing from observation. Higher attainers often help less confident peers to relate the teacher's written comments on their work in terms that they understand. A strong area of the present work, based on the locality, is in the students' growing appreciation of the beauty surrounding them in the built and natural environment. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average. Girls attained higher results than boys, although boys' achieved better than boys do nationally. Over the past three years results have varied, with boys' results adversely affecting the overall performance in 2002 and 2004.

127. Achievement in lessons in Years 7 to 9 is good overall. Students in Year 7 are well trained to use their homework time to find facts, for example about Picasso. In lessons they are encouraged to read aloud, distinguish facts from opinions and present work which is visually pleasing and factually accurate. Most students take a pride in their work and behave well, although several lower achieving boys do need constant reminders as to what is appropriate behaviour. In Year 8 students understand the importance of special places for the Aborigines and most students can translate this idea in terms of their own experience. A number of boys and a few girls in this year group have low self-esteem and too readily seek attention through disruptive behaviour. This occasionally slows the pace of the lesson, which leads to most students' underachieving. In all year groups, students with special education needs achieve well, because their needs are known and teachers and assistants work well together to ensure that they are given the right level of assistance. Talented students are encouraged by the open-ended nature of tasks to extend their use of colour or tone as they experiment with materials. ICT is mainly used for research and for homework.

128. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is very good. Higher achievers draw confidently, choosing appropriate materials to render details on buildings, which then enhances the composition they are working on. The self-esteem of lower achievers is raised when they fully comprehend what they have to do to improve further. Higher achievers in Year 10 are curious about the artist's work they are studying and keen to discuss what they see. Lower achievers, mainly but not exclusively boys, often lack motivation at the level of ideas preferring more practical tasks. Their unwillingness to get involved at this level imposes a false ceiling on their potential achievement.

129. Teaching and learning ranges from unsatisfactory to good in Years 7 to 9 and is very good in Years 10 and 11. The strongest features are teachers' planning for inclusion, enthusiasm for the subject, high expectations and focus on students' literacy and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Weaknesses lie in behaviour management. Most students learn best when they are actively involved either by observing, doing or discussing. A number find it hard to listen and when this activity goes on for too long their attitudes deteriorate.

130. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Mentoring of the unqualified teacher is a very strong feature. Assessment is making a positive contribution to students' learning. Enrichment activities by way of having artists into the school is a very good feature but lack of trips to galleries limits understanding of the art world beyond the locality. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. All points have been resolved although ICT could be developed further. Concern is expressed over the cramped conditions many students are working in, which does not help those with behavioural problems. The fifty-minute period limits the practical activities undertaken, particularly in Years 10 and 11.



## Music

Provision in music is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work is well matched to needs of differing groups of students.
- Above average GCSE results show students are achieving well.
- There is very good use of a variety of resources.
- Lessons are well planned.
- Students are not sufficiently informed as to how well they are doing and how they can improve.
- Students are not made aware of the music of other cultures.

### Commentary

131. The number of students entering for GCSE in 2004 was too small for reliable comparisons with national averages. However they do indicate significant improvement with standards at national average levels. When compared with similar schools nationally they are well above average. Students entering did better in music than in their other subjects. In work seen, standards in Years 10 and 11 were average. Students are able to identify significant features of timbre and structure when listening to music. Their compositions show good use of technology, with electronic textures well exploited. Some students produce exciting compositions in idiomatic rock style. A good proportion of students take instrumental lessons and attain average standards overall. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average. Students' compositions show imaginative use of timbre, with good progression over the three years. They understand how chords are constructed and control keyboards well, but when reading and playing from musical notation they are over-reliant on the use of letter names. When listening to music, the students can identify the use of the various elements of music and show some understanding of compositional devices. .

132. The students achieve well in music in both Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Compared with their lower than average standards on entry they do well in attaining average standards by Year 9. The GCSE groups maintain this progress and achieve well by Year 11. Students with special educational needs do well because work is well matched to their needs. Students of differing ethnicity and those for whom English is an additional language achieve well. Girls generally do better than boys, as a result of the attitudes of some boys causing lack of concentration and hampering their own and others' progress.

133. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Lessons are well planned and take good account of the differing needs of the students. There is very good use of a variety of resources including ICT, although the use of the latter is hampered by a lack of computers in the department. All groups of students are well included in all activities. Students with special educational needs make good progress helped by a high level of individual attention and very good use of ICT to help them overcome performance difficulties. Homework is insufficiently used in Years 7 to 9 to support learning. Behaviour is generally good, although in some lessons the attitudes of a small number of boys have a negative effect on their concentration. In these instances the teaching is sometimes not prompt enough in challenging unsatisfactory attitudes. Assessment is organised and carried out

systematically and there is good use of evaluation by the students. Marking is conscientious but lacking in information on how well students are doing in relation to national standards and on ways in which they can improve.

134. Leadership and management in the subject are both good. The instrumental teaching is well co-ordinated and the use of resources is well managed. Documentation is detailed and there is good self evaluation and monitoring of performance data. There is insufficient provision made in the curriculum for the students to experience contact with music of other cultures. The accommodation is very good overall and well used but the main room is cramped for the larger groups. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. GCSE results have improved. The time allocation for music has been increased. The use of ICT has improved and is now good..

## **Drama**

Provision in drama is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well, with above average GCSE grades compared to other secondary modern schools.
- Good and very good teaching promotes good achievement and learning.
- Students are provided with an imaginative range of drama activities.
- Students have a too limited understanding of the ideas and working methods of influential directors and theatre practitioners.
- The subject makes a positive contribution to students' personal, moral, social and cultural development.

## **Commentary**

135. The majority of students enter Year 7 with a limited understanding of drama and role-play. As a result of good teaching and an imaginative scheme of work, students make good progress and achieve standards in line with expectations at the end of Year 9. Students sustain good progress in Years 10 and 11 and achieve standards close to the national average, though standards are above average when compared to similar secondary modern schools. This is reflected in the 2003 GCSE results, though unvalidated results declined somewhat in the 2004 examinations. Achievement in all years is good.

136. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make the same progress as all other members of their class.

137. Students in Year 7 could be seen to be making good progress in their knowledge of freeze frames and the ability to add dialogue to them in order to produce some imaginative improvisations. Students in Year 8 likewise made good progress in their drama skills as they engaged in an interesting project entitled 'Planet Earth'. Students have a good knowledge of a range of drama genre. This was seen in a good unit of work on horror stories and films.

138. Students work well together. They listen to and value each other's ideas and opinions, and are prepared to adapt their ideas and opinions in order to suit the needs of

the group. GCSE drama is a popular option. This is reflected in the enthusiasm that students bring to their lessons. Good progress was observed in Year 10 as students focused on the creation of believable characters within different contexts and situation. Students' commitment and self-discipline makes a positive contribution to the quality of work they produce, with one group, for example, sensitively exploring the issue of physical abuse within families. This was a good example of drama's ability to make a contribution to students' personal, social and moral development. Whilst students in Years 10 and 11 utilise a good range of drama skills and techniques in their practical work, they have a limited knowledge of the working methods of influential directors and theatre practitioners.

139. The quality of teaching is good, with some very good teaching being observed. Teachers are very secure in their subject and use it to good effect, to provide students with an imaginative range of drama activities. Regular chances are given for students to share and celebrate what they have achieved, and regularly assess and evaluate each other's work in order to help students to improve the quality of their work.

140. Leadership and management in drama are good. The Head of Drama has introduced a good range of documentation, including imaginative schemes of work which support all members of the department in their teaching of the subject. Satisfactory procedures are in place to assess and track progress, with students also evaluating their own efforts.

141. There is a drama club, with all students being given the chance to take part in school productions. These are much appreciated and enjoyed by students, staff and parents. Students are also given the chance to visit a number of theatre productions, in order extend their wider knowledge of drama.

142. With the necessity to work in a co-operative manner and the chance to explore a number of contemporary issues the subject makes a valuable contribution to students' personal, moral and social development. Standards in the subject have improved since the last inspection.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' achievement is good in Years 10 and 11.
- Results in the GCSE examination are well below the national average.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities is well supported by enthusiastic groups of students.

### **Commentary**

143. The number of students gaining the higher A\*-C grade results in the July 2004 examination was well below the national average. However inspection evidence indicates that the large groups of boys and girls who are involved in the present examination course are working well and are likely to achieve grades that are an improvement on previous years' results.

144. Students arrive at the school with varying levels of physical education skill and experiences, with many below that expected of 11 year olds. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, the majority of students at the end of Year 9 attain standards that are in line with national expectations. Students perform well in a wide range of activities. In games activities students demonstrate good ball control, and are aware of simple attack and defence strategies. Many are able to execute basic isolated skills to a satisfactory level, although their ability to apply these skills within the concept of a game is less well developed. Students understand the need to warm up for physical activity and are able to lead their classes in effective warm-up routines at the beginning of lessons.

145. Students make good progress during Years 10 and 11 and by the time they are sixteen years old their attainment is in line with national expectations, with some, particularly those in the examination groups, doing even better. Good levels of skill are clearly evident in a range of activities. Students are able to undertake a range of tasks including acting as officials, referees and coaches.

146. Students with special educational needs are well integrated. They are given much support and encouragement from both staff and students and reach levels of attainment that are commendable for them. Talented students are encouraged to extend their skills both in school and with outside clubs. The school is in urgent need of the planned new sports hall and the tennis courts are in need of re-surfacing.

147. The department has maintained the good quality teaching noted at the previous inspection. All lessons observed were judged to be at least satisfactory and the majority judged to be good. All lessons begin and end in an orderly manner with objectives being clearly stated and understood by the students. Lessons are well organised and conducted at a brisk, demanding pace with a series of tasks that promote a high level of interest and effort, and enable all students to make progress. There is an expectation that all students will work hard and behave well, and invariably these expectations are met. Staff give very freely of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Students respond very positively to the enthusiasm of their teachers. Their enjoyment of the lessons is very evident

148. At the time of the inspection the head of department had been in post for just over two terms. In this relatively short time he has had a very significant effect on the work and organisation of the department. He has reviewed and updated the schemes of work and has produced a good departmental handbook. The department should now consider offering students in Years 10 and 11 the opportunity to take the Junior Sports Leaders' Award. Departmental staff work well together, support each other, and show a very strong commitment to their students and to raising the status of the subject within the school.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **BUSINESS**

Provision in business is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Assessment practice is effective over the work internally examined.
- Good teaching enables students to develop good attitudes to learning.
- Teachers have supportive relationships with students.
- Gains in confidence through independent learning are enhancing research skills.
- Students' use of ICT is insufficient due to a lack of access to limited equipment.

### **Commentary**

149. Standards of work seen in business studies were average. This represents good achievement and is a result of good teaching. Students exceed expectations based on prior attainment. Students' attitudes also cause the quality of their learning to be good. Students make good progress as they move from Year 11 to Years 12 and 13. There are good gains by the end of Years 11.

150. Pass rates, recently, for Year 11 are average and for the AVCE in Year 13 they are above average over all grades. The higher A\* to C grades obtained have been below average. Boys and girls are attaining equality over the whole grade range. They enjoy studying a subject that is relevant to their own lives and experience and they welcome following a course that is active and enjoyable. Students take part in discussions and role play to collect evidence of their skills in communication. A number of other transferable skills are taught.

151. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers have a good technical competence in teaching number, writing and the use of electronic sources. A Year 10 lesson discussing share dealing and linking it to the recent interest in Manchester United reinforced learning significantly. The depth of coverage on Marks and Spencer started a good argument from which much was learnt. Lessons are well planned and each lesson has a clear learning aim. Higher attaining students are given more demanding tasks to match their ability. Students are constantly acquiring new knowledge and skills. The higher attainers can develop their own ideas and can explain the relevance of economic theory to business practice. Boys and girls can communicate in appropriate depth and in a way a business would require. Teachers enhance students' skills and knowledge to answer questions purposefully and develop independent reasoned argument through discussion, extended writing and the use of electronic sources.

152. Leadership and management are very good. There have been many positive improvements since the last inspection. Students receive expert advice about careers in business. Teachers have good contacts with commerce. There are well developed schemes of work which maintain progress and standards. Improvement in the provision of business education over time is evidenced by an improved examination performance. The progress made is very good. The quality of teaching is having a positive influence upon students' progress and the standards they achieve. Teachers successfully fulfil their role to provide a suitable climate for learning.

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

### **Health and social care**

Provision in GCSE health and social care is **good**

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good; students achieve well.
- Leadership and management are good.

153. The first results for this new course were obtained in 2004. No validated comparative results are available, but the proportion of students who obtained higher grades in the GCSE was larger than that for the core subjects. The majority of students obtained grades that were expected of them and some obtained higher grades than were predicted by their national test results at the end of Year 9. The standard of work seen was average.

154. In the lesson observed, students were involved in the discussion of health and social services available to adolescents. The teacher ensured that all students were included in the discussion and provided opportunities for them to apply their knowledge and understanding to everyday situations. As a result, students were interested and achieved well. Students' work is marked thoroughly and the teacher makes clear what they need to do to improve. Challenging coursework is set that requires students to carry out independent research into NHS client services. The subject is well led and managed.

## **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has done a lot of productive work on this provision.
- A thorough audit has been carried out across subject departments to identify where they can make a contribution to citizenship.
- Work in the personal, social and health education programme strongly supplements the contributions of the other subject departments.
- Too often citizenship is not always explicitly identified to the students when it is being taught or in the lesson content.

## **Commentary**

155. Citizenship is well underway in the school. A co-ordinator is in place and there is a range of detailed documentation that reflects the high profile that the subject has already been given. An audit has been carried out across subject departments to determine where their own work is already contributing to this national curriculum subject. Students are learning to become informed citizens in many ways. In history, for example, the students cover topics like government, legal and human rights issues and aspects of the world as a global economy. Religious education raises students' awareness of the cultural diversity that is characteristic of modern life in the UK. The place of media in society is part of the study programme in English, and in music and information technology students learn about the work of voluntary groups. The personal, social and health education programme is an additional source of learning in citizenship. This covers topics like economic and industrial understanding, as well as environmental education.

156. Although these aspects and many others are strongly present, they are hardly ever explicitly identified to the students as part of their learning in citizenship, so their attainment is not as significant as it could be. This is an area for development. Students also make satisfactory progress in developing their skills of enquiry and communication, as well as skills of participation and responsible action. Art makes a significant contribution to this in discussion and debate and in reflecting on the process of participating. Students are also expected to express and justify a personal opinion. Music also makes an important contribution to the development of these and other skills. Activity days are included in the current programme for Years 10 and 11 and these further strengthen the provision of citizenship across the school. Overall the standards of attainment in citizenship are average and achievement is satisfactory.

157. Work in the personal, social and health education programme covers other statutory issues as well as a broader range of learning, and overall the provision here is good.

158. During the inspection, the teaching included topics on both citizenship and topics from the personal, social, and health education programme. These lessons were all in Year 8. Overall, the teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and the content is strong and relevant to the students' own lives and experiences. Students learnt a lot about the dangers of smoking and they made very good contributions of their own. Other topics included issues surrounding the media, which is taught as an aspect of citizenship.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

### Sixth forms

159. 12 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.

160. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003 year for which national comparisons are available].

#### *VCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	15	93.3	88.6	0.0	20.6	52.0	60.1
Health and Social Care	24	100.0	93.2	33.3	22.3	76.7	63.5
Performing arts	13	100.0	94.3	30.8	50.4	75.4	77.8
Leisure and Recreation	13	84.6	88.1	23.1	15.0	61.5	57.9
Travel and Tourism	5	80.0	90.0	0.0	19.5	44.0	62.2
Total	70	94.3	89.3	21.4	23.4	66.0	85.5
<i>Level 3 GCE A level</i>							

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	2	100.0	96.4	0.0	39.2	50.0	78.6
English Literature	8	100.0	99.5	0.0	46.5	55.0	86.5
Geography	10	60.0	98.7	0.0	44.5	32.0	84.0
Information technology	1	100.0	95.6	0.0	24.6	80.0	69.5
Mathematics	2	50.0	96.7	0.0	55.6	30.0	88.8
Other social studies	1	100.0	97.4	100.0	42.7	100.0	81.8
Sports/Physical education Studies	3	100.0	98.0	0.0	30.9	66.7	75.2
Total	27	81.5	97.7	3.7	42.1	48.1	81.9

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

Four periods of A-level English were observed during the inspection. Three periods of A-level English literature in Year 12 and one period of A-level language and literature in Year 13

Provision in post-16 English is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the subject are below average but students' achievement is satisfactory.
- Many students are reluctant to make an active contribution to their own learning.
- Good and very good examples of teaching promote good learning in the subject.
- There are too few opportunities for students to take control of their own learning through well-planned group activities.

### Commentary

161. All students who begin the two A-level English courses currently offered by the department have an A\*-C grade in GCSE English and GCSE English Literature. Most students make satisfactory progress in the two years of the course, though standards are below average when compared to expectations at this point in students' studies. This was reflected in final examination results, with no student entering achieving the benchmark of an A or B grade in 2003. Standards in the unvalidated results in 2004 were broadly the same.

162. Although there is evidence that many students have satisfactory speaking and listening skills, many students are reluctant to make an active oral contribution in lessons and are happy to listen to their teachers and defer to their opinions. This is insufficiently



challenged if students are to develop the ability to make a strong personal response to the demanding texts which form part of their studies.

163. Many students have satisfactory technical reading skills, but an underdeveloped vocabulary. This is particularly observed when students read texts from the past, including the plays of Shakespeare and the poetry of Coleridge. Some students read only at a surface level and do not always appreciate the writer's use of language to convey tone, mood and atmosphere and the inner workings of characters' minds. Critical and analytical reading skills are well taught by teachers, though a number of students have problems in applying them to the poetry, novels and plays that they read.

164. Many students make satisfactory progress in their writing skills in Years 12 and 13. Able students produce some well-constructed essays in which they make mature and perceptive points. They sustain a strong personal response to the questions asked of them and are able to support their opinions by evidence from the text and well-selected quotations. In contrast, there are a number of students who are happy to reveal their knowledge of the text, including the basic plot and knowledge of character, but are less secure in their ability to write about ideas, issues and concepts.

165. Whilst students enjoy their English lessons, most of them take a passive approach to their own learning and are happy to receive knowledge.

166. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Individual Lessons are well planned, organised and managed. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and convey it to their students in an interesting manner. Most lessons however are teacher-led and directed with too few chances for students to take control of their own learning through well planned group activities. Occasionally, teachers do not always make the most appropriate demands on students.

167. Leadership and management in sixth form English are satisfactory. The A level syllabi used by teachers are interpreted in a satisfactory manner, with students being given satisfactory support and advice in order to celebrate their strengths and to identify areas for development.

168. Because of fluctuating numbers and a change in the A-level syllabus offered to students it is not possible to make a valid comparison with standards at the time of the last inspection.

## **French**

Provision in French is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good

### **Commentary**

169. In 2004, two students from the school attend French lessons at Beaconsfield High School in conjunction with consortium arrangements, together with students from other

schools. They both have a French speaking background, but they have not studied French since taking their GCSE at the end of Year 8.

170. The teaching in one of the two lessons observed was very good, and good in the other. Learning was good. The former lesson was conducted entirely in French, and all students contributed orally to the discussion. Beaconsfield School students read aloud and spoke well, with an authentic accent. A test on grammar and vocabulary in the second lesson showed that students are making satisfactory progress at an early stage in the course. Attendance is regular and the students are well motivated.

171. The school is developing successful links with the Languages department at Beaconsfield High School. Recent improvement has been good.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The number of students studying A-level mathematics has increased.
- Good teacher-student relationships encourage students to work hard.
- AS-level students are making good progress.
- The GCSE course has not been tailored to meet the needs of the students.
- There is too little planned use of computers.

### Commentary

172. The 2003 A-level results cannot be compared with national results because there were too few students entering. In 2004, the A-level students achieved their target grades but again, there were too few students to make comparisons with national results. There were no AS-level students in 2004 and as a consequence there is no A-level course this year. The GCSE re-sit group students achieved improved grades in 2003.

173. There is currently one Year 12 AS-level class and one Year 12 GCSE re-sit class. The AS-level students are studying pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. The work in their books shows that in pure mathematics they have revised and taken further their work in algebra. Having revised quadratic and cubic equations, they were making good progress sketching graphs of the equations and they made good use of graphical calculators to check their work. In statistics, they were introduced to Venn diagrams, which presented them with some difficulty, as this work was new to them. In mechanics they were manipulating the equations related to motion, but some students were not following the conventional methods for setting down calculations, resulting in errors being made. In one pure mathematics lesson, the students' dialogue illustrated their increasing familiarity with the language of mathematics and their higher level thinking skills.

174. The standard of teaching is satisfactory overall and in AS-level classes, teachers are skilled in eliciting the students' logical thought processes, resulting in the students' good progress. The mature relationship between teachers and students is a strong motivating factor. The teachers are very knowledgeable and clearly enjoy sharing their love of mathematics with the students. Students are aware of their present standard of attainment but have not set themselves target grades.

175. The management of the 6<sup>th</sup> form is satisfactory and the three teachers work well together to plan the programmes of study for the A-level students. However, the GCSE course for students who did not achieve grade C last year is not well enough constructed to ensure that the students will be thoroughly prepared for the examination next year. A revised and condensed scheme has not yet been prepared and the particular needs of individual students have not been identified. Most of the current Year 12 AS-level students plan to study mathematics to A-level. The number of students studying AS level this year is much greater than in previous years, reflecting the increasing popularity of the subject. To develop the A-level courses further, teachers should plan increased use of computers to enrich learning.

## **Numeracy across the curriculum**

176. Students' competence in mathematics is generally satisfactory. Their skills and knowledge are sufficient to deal with requirements in all subjects. In design technology, art and business studies it is good. Business studies students calculate interest rates and dividends. They understand the FTSE index and play the stock market game skilfully.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The new A-level course is increasingly popular, drawing in students from outside the school.
- Teaching is good and students learn well.

### **Commentary**

177. In 2004 a small group of students studied at the nearby high school as part of the joint arrangements. Numbers of entries overall over the years have been too small to judge trends in performance. In September 2003, the school introduced a new course, providing tuition at its own site. This was first examined at AS level in summer 2004. About half of the original intake gained pass grades. The remainder dropped away over the year, having failed to keep up with the demands of coursework. A very small group has continued into the second year of the full advanced level course. Students are achieving satisfactorily and are on track to gain middle grade passes at the end of the year. However, frequent absence is causing some concern. A new, larger group of Year 12 students has just started the course. A number of students have transferred from other schools because the vocational nature of the course meets their needs well. Standards of work are in line with expectations for this early stage of the course and students' achievement is satisfactory.

178. Teachers link technical aspects of the subject well with its social implications. Year 13 work shows a sound understanding of how developments in ICT impact on the workplace. During the inspection students began research for an assignment to explore how ICT may be contributing to the threatened closure of Post Offices and the possible restructuring of W H Smith. Work is demanding and requires students to write well-argued reports founded on critical analysis of the evidence. Very good, almost individual tuition raised important questions such as the long-term viability of large shopping centres in the light of rapid developments in electronic shopping over the Internet. Year 12 students have a developing understanding of how ICT serves different organisations, for example in the design and manufacture of pneumatic mechanisms or of financial control. Good whole class and group discussions developed well students' knowledge of how information flows through the various departments in a supermarket when a customer makes purchases. Relaxed, lively discussion added much to the enjoyment of the activity and contributed well to achievement over the lesson. Students are given clear criteria for low, middle and high-grade requirements for each unit of work. There is a clear expectation that all students will aim as highly as possible, and this information helps students to assess their own work.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and Technology**

Provision in design and technology is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good and consequently so is learning.
- Strong leadership and management.
- The refurbishment and upgrading of some accommodation has improved provision.

- Old, or irrelevant, equipment and tools do not ensure that the curriculum is well resourced.

## Commentary

179. Nine candidates were entered for the AS-level product design examination, with five being successful in gaining pass grades. In the A-level product design examination, six students entered and four were successful in gaining grades A-E.

180. The introduction of the product design course has provided a useful programme of study for those entering the design profession.

181. Attainment during lessons is satisfactory and students demonstrate a growing good competence in tackling a range of design problems. Folders indicate a methodical approach and also show the development of personal style. Students are keen to succeed and many demonstrate independent learning skills. Most students work hard but there is a core of students whose poor attendance record adversely affects their ability to pass the examination.

182. A beneficial feature of the teaching on this course is the involvement of a commercial designer and a teacher from within the department. Students have indicated the benefits of such a team approach as many see their futures in the wider design industry. The teachers are enthusiastic and provide an attractive well-planned programme. Teachers have high expectations and the quality of their teaching is good.

183. Students demonstrate an impressive range of individual interests and innovative approaches in their projects. Students' attitudes are sound and they respond positively to the challenges introduced by the teachers.

184. The sixth form course is led by a very effective, able and enthusiastic head of department. Planning is meticulous and the course is well managed and supported. Resources are adequate, but the course curriculum is ill-matched to some ageing equipment. Since the previous inspection there has been good improvement.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attainment at A and AS level has been well below national expectations.
- Excellent students' attitudes lead to good achievement in lessons.
- Very good assessment of students' work means that they know how to improve their standards.
- Very small groups undermine standards.

### Commentary

185. The very small numbers of students involved in both AS and A-level courses means that accurate analysis of results is not possible. However, in 2003, A level results for grades A to E were well below the national average and no students gained A or B grades. In 2004, three students gained an A to C grades, which shows improvement. At AS level the spread of grades was between C and U.

186. Work seen during the inspection suggests that standards are improving and are now close to average, with no significant difference between the work of male and female students. This represents good achievement. Students have a good understanding of the course topics, such as the effects of rapid urbanisation on developing areas; Mexico City was used effectively as a case study. Students' coursework shows the ability to form hypotheses about a range of geographical topics and to gather and analyse data effectively. Their folders contain a well organised body of work, with some extended essays that show the satisfactory developing ability to synthesise information from a number of sources.

187. Teaching and learning are good. Very good assessment procedures, both in class and through the marking of work, inform students of how they can improve their output. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge which is passed on to students with enthusiasm. In one good lesson, where students were given a range of essays to mark and evaluate, students achieved well and learned a lot about the criteria used by the examination boards for grading papers. However, students are not always encouraged to think for themselves and some opportunities were missed to extend discussion so that they could learn from each other. The gifted and talented were provided for adequately by more rigorous questioning to extend their understanding.

188. Leadership and management are good. The newly appointed head of department is in the process of overhauling management systems and recognises the need to raise student numbers and standards of attainment. Students' progress is closely monitored and the reasons for low attainment in examinations are being investigated with some success in partnership with representatives of the examination board.

189. Students enjoy their geography studies and their attitudes are excellent. Last year all students who started either AS or A level finished the courses. However, group sizes are very small, which means that students do not get enough peer support in lessons, and this has an effect on standards.

## **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is consistently good, enabling students to learn and achieve well.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

### **Commentary**

190. The recent A-level history results are below the national average for the higher grades A-B. They are in line for grades A to E. Overall, students achieve well from their GCSE starting points.

191. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers ensure that students understand progressively more about how the past has affected life in the twenty-first century. Teachers' good subject knowledge leads to students increasing their understanding of coursework objectives, as well as widening their skill development. Students are committed to producing their best work. Their ability to work independently is an emerging strength. They are beginning to use sources of historical significance with confidence. . A Year 13



session, which had been extensively researched, examined the death speech of Northumberland in the reign of Mary 1.

192. Leadership and management are very good. The support and environment for learning that is provided enable students to feel secure, valued and well placed to make the most of their opportunities in the sixth form. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

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

### **Art**

Provision in art is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards, of work in lessons are above average.
- In Years 12 and 13, achievement is very good.
- Shortage of storage space limits the scale of work that can be done.

### **Commentary**

193. The overall standard on entry to the sixth form is above average, with some students having gained high grades at GCSE. The majority of students are articulate, although some find it difficult to translate what they know and can discuss into written form. ICT is used regularly, at home, for research. The current Year 13 students are the first for many years to take art at A level in the school.

194. Students understand the examination criteria by which they are being judged. They also recognise the importance of being aware of contemporary issues in art, because their teacher models this level of interest for them. They are used to being asked to think, discuss and work out ideas and concepts for themselves. This occurred in their exposure to the work of entrants for the most recent Stirling prize for architecture. Most worked hard to understand the works of art and to apply the relevant criteria when judging the worth of each entrant.

195. Higher achievers in Year 12 show good levels of understanding of art and artists, acquired through watching television documentaries or from the Internet. Year 13 students draw on previous course learning, when evaluating the work of others. A number of students prove to be better listeners than debaters but when they have something relevant to say they do join in. All students use good note-making techniques. No practical work was undertaken during the inspection, but work in folders and on display revealed very good skill development in drawing and painting and expressive use of colour. Written work, by way of annotated notes to accompany and explain how the work has developed, is well presented, offering good insights into students' working practices.

196. Teaching and learning are very good and occasionally outstanding. The teacher has very good knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues in art, as well as deep understanding of how students relate what they learn to their own work.

197. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a very clear sense of vision and a determination that students should aim high. Students enjoy coming to art lessons, because they are challenged to think and become independent learners. When they fail to have the high standards the teacher expects they are firmly guided into acquiring better study skills. There are no trips abroad, although visits to London galleries are a valuable feature of the current provision. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, in so far as courses are now run in this school rather than students having to attend a nearby high school.

### **AVCE Performing Arts**

198. Three periods of AVCE performing arts lessons were inspected during the inspection, two drama lessons and one music lesson. It was not possible to observe any dance lessons.

Provision in performing arts is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve good standards in their final examinations.
- Students are provided with a good and imaginative range of performing arts activities.
- Good teaching in the subject results in good achievement and learning in the subject.
- Students demonstrate a great deal of enthusiasm for the subject.

### **Commentary**

199. All students who start the course are expected to have a GCSE A\* to C in music, drama, dance or the expressive arts. Students then go on to achieve well over the two years of the course, with the result that nearly two thirds of students achieved an A to C grade in their final examinations in 2003.

200. Students made good progress in their drama skills and strategies as they worked on the required style of acting for the production of a devised drama based on television 'soap opera'.

201. A similar approach was observed in a music lesson which explored the technical aspects of drums and drumming and where students set up all the necessary equipment in order to record a piece of music using both guitars and drums.

202. The quality of teaching observed in all lessons was good, with teachers providing students with a good range of demanding practical and technical activities. Teachers in both subjects observed were very secure in their subject matter and had high expectations of all students.

203. The course is delivered on a rolling programme, with Years 12 and 13 students working well together. They display real enthusiasm for the subject.

204. It is not possible to make a valid judgement on leadership and management in the subject, though the AVCE syllabus used by the school is interpreted in a challenging and demanding manner.

205. Students make a significant contribution to the production of school plays and musicals as well as performing their own pantomimes in partner primary schools. The subject was not offered at the time of the last inspection. It is not possible to make any comments about improvement in standards.

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

### **AVCE Travel and tourism**

Provision in travel and tourism is **good**.

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

- Standards are below average but students achieve well.
- Good teaching and good assessment enable good learning
- Excellent student attitudes lead to a very good ethos for learning
- Teaching groups are small and inhibit the range of learning experiences.

#### **Commentary**

206. In 2003 results were below the national average; there were no A or B grades but the number of students gaining grades C to E was above average. However, student numbers have been small and statistical comparisons are unreliable. Considering that none of these students had the opportunity to study the subject before Year 12, this represents good achievement.

207. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average, with no significant differences between males and females, though there are fewer males overall in the teaching groups. Year 12 students show a developing understanding of the way that topical issues such as terrorism affect tourism, although they have limited background knowledge about some topics, for example what the British Commonwealth means. By Year 13 they have developed well as independent learners, able to take responsibility for running a school event and beginning to understand the full implications of working as a team.

208. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers understand the course requirements very well. Organisation and planning are very good, aimed towards developing students' independence, learning from their own experiences. Students of different levels of attainment are all provided for, for example by differing expectations in discussion. Assessment is good and students know how to improve their next unit of work. There was some slow pacing in one lesson, due to over-indulgent extension of discussion and this slowed learning, because there was no time to discuss fully the requirements of the following homework. Classroom resources are limited, but outside resources are well used, for example links with a local hotel which formed a basis for a case study.

209. The subject is well led and managed by a newly-appointed head of department, who is in the process of developing new schemes of work, development plan and departmental handbook. Common elements of the course are taught and managed in tandem with other vocational courses, which is a good use of time whilst groups remain small.

210. Students enjoy their travel and tourism studies and see the course as a good link to future work in the tourism industry. Last year all students who started the course completed it. Numbers of students opting for the course are low, but have increased in 2004.

### **AVCE Leisure and Recreation**

Provision in leisure and recreation is **satisfactory**.

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

- The quality of teaching is good as is learning.
- Students are well motivated and enthusiastic about the course.
- The small number of students taking the course inhibits the range of learning experiences.

#### **Commentary**

211. Standards of work seen during the inspection reached the national average. Although the number of students opting to take the course has remained low, students have a very positive attitude towards the subject and are prepared to work hard. Four students completed the course in July 2004. All the candidates gained pass grade awards.

212. There are small groups of students in Years 12 and 13 presently taking the AVCE course. They are enthusiastic and readily join in class discussions, with most of them able to make informed and perceptive comment regarding the recreation industry. They are beginning to develop research skills, and the higher attaining students are able to demonstrate critical analysis of information. Students are able to articulate their views with clarity and conviction, and use their ICT skills well to produce coursework folders of a good quality.

213. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The course teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and are able to pass on this enthusiasm to their students. Lessons are well planned and make good use of variety of activities, including question and answer sessions, group work and role play. Visits to local sports centres, sporting organisations and professional sports clubs enhance the learning. Teachers are constantly challenging the understanding of the students, and in oral work, draw answers out through careful questioning. Teachers plan and sequence their lessons well, with many having a practical focus that enables students to sustain interest and motivation. Teachers treat their students with a high degree of sensitivity, resulting in them reaching levels of attainment that are commendable.

214. The teacher in charge of the course had only been in post for a few weeks at the time of the inspection. He has made a good start in his new post and is in the process up reviewing and updating the documentation. The members of staff who are teaching the students offer between them a wide range of experiences and skills, including first hand experience of the recreation industry. The accommodation for the subject is good and there is good access to computer equipment which students use very competently. The AVCE course has been introduced since the previous inspection.

## **BUSINESS**

215. **Business was sampled at post-16.** In business, the recent pass rates in the AVCE examination are above average over the whole grade range. There is significant value added in the results. Group sizes are larger. The quality of teaching in Years 12 and 13 is good, resulting in good learning. The strengths are teachers' knowledge and their commercial contacts. Students make confident use of primary and secondary sources. Boys and girls communicate in appropriate depth and in a variety of methods. Leadership and management are very good. Stated aims for business education are appropriate. There has been good improvement made each year to the subject's provision.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

Provision in AVCE health and social care is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good. Students achieve well.
- Leadership and management are good.
- The course includes many opportunities for work related learning.
- Students have target grades but are not clear about the levels they are currently working at.
- Students do not check their own progress on a regular basis.

### **Commentary**

216. Results in 2003 were above average. Students who studied for the double award achieved well, obtaining higher grades than were predicted from their GCSE scores. All students achieved a pass grade. Results for single award students were average and all students obtained a pass grade. The results for 2004 were lower for both the single and double award, but all students obtained a pass grade.

217. The teaching is good and students learn well. Lessons are well planned and resourced, teachers know their subject well and demonstrate high expectations of performance from their students. Teachers' relationships with their students are very positive. The best teaching inspires students and employs innovative interactive methods that enable them to reflect on their own experiences, imagine the experiences of others and evaluate their own learning. For example in a Year 12 lesson on the effectiveness of communication for health practitioners, excellent teaching enabled students to take part in a range of experiences designed to reinforce learning. In one task, students were given the opportunity to role-play assertive, manipulative, passive and aggressive styles of communication. This not only reinforced their understanding of these behaviours but also enabled them to experience the affects of this behaviour at first hand, either as client or practitioner, and this resulted in excellent learning. Students are challenged and are given assignments that require a great deal of independent research involving outside health agencies. Teachers assess students' work well, informing students what they need to do to improve. Although students know their predicted final grades they are not sure of the current levels at which they are working and they do not check their own progress on a regular basis.

218. The leadership and management of the subject are good and have contributed well to the success of the students. The head of department has a vision for raising standards and a committed team of experienced, well-qualified teachers shares this. This aspiration is reflected clearly in the detailed departmental plan. The department is well managed on a day-to-day basis and good practice is shared, although a formal system for the monitoring of teaching and learning is not in place. The course addresses work related learning well and is enriched by working links with outside health and social care agencies. Informative schemes of work and departmental guidelines are in place. Accommodation is satisfactory, but lacks a subject specific base. Students are very positive about the subject and enjoy the course.

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

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