

INSPECTION REPORT

Vyners School

Ickenham, Uxbridge

LEA area: Hillingdon

Unique reference number: 102442

Headteacher: Mr Brian Houghton

Lead inspector: Brian Rowe

Dates of inspection: 7th – 11th February 2005

Inspection number: 271600

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1116
School address:	Warren Road Ickenham Uxbridge Middlesex
Postcode:	UB10 8AB
Telephone number:	01895 234342
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Heather Danpure
Date of previous inspection:	October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Vyners School is a mixed comprehensive for pupils aged 11 to 18, situated in Ickenham, Middlesex. The school mostly serves the local area and is over-subscribed. Since the previous inspection, the school has gained specialist mathematics and computing college status and the Sportsmark award. Many of the pupils come from families that are economically and socially advantaged. There are currently 1116 pupils on roll, including 205 in the sixth form, making it a larger than average sized secondary school. There is an attached unit for 18 students who have a hearing impairment. About one-fifth of the pupils come from minority ethnic groups, a higher proportion than average, but only a few are at early stages of using the English language. There are no refugees or pupils in local care at the school. Less than 5 per cent of pupils receive free school meals, and this proportion is well below the national average. Pupils' attainment on entry is above average. About 4 per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and this is well below average. Currently 37 have a Statement of Special Educational Need and this proportion is above average when compared to other secondary schools. Mobility of pupils is very low as few join or leave during the academic year. Staff turnover is lower than most schools, but there has been difficulty in recruiting staff in some subjects.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1695	Brian Rowe	Lead inspector	
19743	Ann Taylor	Lay inspector	
20639	Roger Grant	Team inspector	Mathematics
33695	Carolyn Waterstone	Team inspector	English
31385	Neil Gillespie	Team inspector	Science Work-related learning
20767	Jerry Royle	Team inspector	Information and communication technology English as an additional language
2866	Robert Battey	Team inspector	Art and design
12721	David Riddle	Team inspector	Design and technology Special educational needs
10010	George Wallace	Team inspector	Geography
10895	David Wasp	Team inspector	History Psychology
27082	Geoffrey Henshall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
2032	Christopher Polyblank	Team inspector	Music
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education
23137	Ron Fewtrell	Team inspector	Business education
5714	Frances Thornton	Team inspector	Biology
19827	Mary Henderson	Team inspector	Hearing impaired unit
15485	Roger Butler	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Vyners School is a **good** school that provides **good** value for money. The headteacher and governors provide **effective** leadership and this ensures the school supports pupils **well**. The senior leadership group have a clear vision for future developments to improve the quality of education for all pupils. The overall quality of leadership and management is **good**, but procedures for monitoring are not sufficiently rigorous. The **good** quality of teaching and learning ensures pupils achieve **well** overall.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school has created an ethos where pupils are well cared for, develop very positive attitudes, behave very well and develop into mature young adults.
- Test and examination results are well above average because of the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and good teaching.
- Pupils' personal development is very good and enhanced through an excellent provision of enrichment and extra-curricular activities.
- The headteacher and governors provide effective leadership that ensures improvements to the education for pupils.
- Although teaching and learning are good overall, not all lessons are sufficiently planned to match the needs of all pupils and there is not a high enough expectation of what the most able can achieve.
- The use made of assessment information is improving, but not used well enough to improve learning in all subjects.
- The systems to maintain a regular check on aspects of school life and then take action to ensure improvements are not sufficiently robust and rigorous.
- The school is very effective in seeking, valuing and acting upon pupils' and students' views.
- Pupils are very successful in geography, physical education and music because of very good teaching and very effective leadership and management.

Overall, improvements since the previous inspection have been good and the school has gained specialist mathematics and computing college status and the Sportsmark award. The key issues identified in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. Although there have been considerable improvements in the provision for spiritual development the school still not does comply fully with the requirements for collective worship.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	E
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	B	B	B	
Key: A' - well above average; B- above average; C- average; D- below average; E- well below average					
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained at the end of Year 9.					

Pupils start school with standards in literacy and numeracy that are above average. Since the previous inspection, the overall results from the national Year 9 tests indicate that standards have been well above the national average. Results improved in 2004 and when compared to prior attainment at the end of Year 6, pupils made good progress and achieved well. Results in GCSE

examinations show a steady improvement over recent years and were well above average in 2004. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactorily. Over the last few years, GCSE results compared to schools with pupils of a similar prior attainment have been close to average. Examination results in the sixth form have been steady over the past few years and were above the national average in 2004. Based on work seen, students achieve well in relation to their ability and prior attainment at GCSE. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs, including those in the hearing impaired unit, and those who have English as an additional language achieve well in relation to their targets. There is no significant difference between the standards and achievement of boys and girls. Pupils develop good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills as they move through the school.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the school is **very good**. Attendance is high and punctuality is good. Students have very positive attitudes to school. They behave very well and develop extremely positive relationships with each other and staff.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **good**. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. There are examples of very good teaching to be found in most departments. Arrangements for assessing pupils' work are satisfactory. Several aspects of the overall educational provision are strengths within the school. These include an excellent provision for enrichment and very good links with the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management throughout the school is **good**. The headteacher provides good leadership and is a visible presence, well respected by pupils and parents. Other key staff with senior management responsibilities provide very good support. The governance of the school is good and governors contribute fully to school development. The majority of heads of department are providing good and sometimes very good management. Line management is well established, but monitoring procedures in some areas lack sufficient rigour. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and has the capacity to make this good school even better.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have positive views. The school is highly respected in the local community and hugely oversubscribed. Students also have positive views about school and they are proud to come here. They say that this is a safe environment where everyone is respected and treated fairly. They enjoy very good relationships with staff. Students recognise their opinions are heard, valued and acted upon.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Plan work and lessons to match the needs of all pupils and increase the expectation of what the most able can achieve in some subjects.
- Strengthen the use made of assessment information to improve learning in all subjects.
- Sharpen the systems that check on all aspects of school life and ensure they are sufficiently regular, robust and rigorous.
- Improve the provision for biology in the sixth form.
- Continue to provide more accommodation for sixth form students.

and, to meet statutory requirements by:

- Providing a daily act of collective worship.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is **good** and it is **cost-effective**. Standards are **above average**, but examination results have fluctuated partly dependent on the ability of the students staying on. The quality of teaching and learning is **good** overall and the achievement of students is **good**. Students are **well supported** and guided as a result of caring and dedicated staff. Leadership and management are **good** and have improved considerably. Areas for development are recognised and these include more rigorous monitoring of teaching, learning and students' achievement and the attention paid to the preparation of students for examination courses.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students are well supported and cared for and show very positive attitudes to their learning and to the school.
- There is a very good provision for students to extend their personal development through an extensive programme of visits, speakers and opportunities to take responsibility for organising activities and supporting younger pupils.
- The monitoring of teaching, learning and students' achievement is not sufficiently rigorous.
- The opportunity to develop independent learning and study skills is limited, especially because the accommodation is inadequate for the number of students.
- There is a good range of academic subjects.
- Leadership and management are good and have recently improved because of an effective new head of sixth form.
- The provision in chemistry, geography, psychology and physical education is very good, but unsatisfactory in biology.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	
English	Provision is good . Results in 2004 were above average and the standard of work seen is well above average. This is because teaching and learning are good, giving students the skills to speak and write confidently and critically. Leadership and management are good.
German	Provision is good . The standard of work seen is above average and achievement is good. Students show a high level of oral fluency. Teaching and learning are good. Leadership and management are good.
Mathematics	Provision is good . Results from 2004 AS and A-level show standards are well above average and an improvement over the previous year, with boys performing better than girls. Teaching and learning are very good. Leadership and management are good.
Science	
Biology	Provision is unsatisfactory . Standards in A-level were below

Chemistry	<p>average and achievement is unsatisfactory. This is because there is insufficient day-to-day assessment to identify weaknesses, to enable remedial action.</p> <p>Provision is very good. Examination results were well above average. Very good leadership has enabled knowledgeable teachers to challenge and encourage students to learn very well. The department is proud of the high student numbers who study science courses at university.</p>
Humanities	
Geography	Provision is very good . The 2004 A-level results were above average. Consistently good teaching ensures good achievement. Teachers use a wide range of interesting approaches and good up-to-date resources. Leadership and management are very good.
Psychology	Provision is very good . Examinations results are above average. Current standards are well above average and students achieve well in terms of prior attainment. Teaching and learning are very good overall and students' attitudes are excellent. Leadership and management are excellent.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel.	
Physical education	Provision is very good . Standards in public examinations are at national expectations. Current standards are above national expectations and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are very good. Students' attitudes are very good. Leadership and management are very good.
Business	
Business education	Provision is good . Examination results have been above average and students' achievement is good. Teaching and learning are good with very good relationships between teachers and students. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

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 have readily available access to well-informed personal support and guidance from their subject teachers and form tutor. The newly introduced one-to-one guidance sessions between student and form tutor are working well. Relationships with staff are very good and staff are very helpful. Students' views are valued and responded to positively.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are good. The new head of sixth form is providing good leadership, and has a strong commitment to monitoring students' progress. Sixth-form staff ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the sixth form. They are promoting a greater role for sixth-form students in the school.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are positive and supportive of the school. They recognise and value the improvements made by the new head of sixth form and would recommend the sixth form to others. Talking with inspectors, they largely refuted the negative views identified in the students' questionnaire. Their views about wanting taster courses and better induction prior to entering the sixth form are valid. They feel that the school values their opinions and fully involves them in its life and work.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Since the previous inspection, the overall results from the national Year 9 tests indicate that standards have been **well above** the national average. Results improved in 2004 and when compared to prior attainment at the end of Year 6, pupils made good progress and **achieved well**. Results in GCSE examinations show a steady improvement over recent years and were **well above** average in 2004. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make **satisfactory** progress and achieve satisfactorily. Over the last few years, GCSE results compared to schools with pupils of a similar prior attainment are **close to average**. Examination results in the sixth form have been steady over the past few years and were **above** the national average in 2004. Based on work seen, students achieve well in relation to their ability and prior attainment at GCSE. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs, including those in the hearing impaired unit, and those who have English as an additional language achieve well in relation to their targets. There is no significant difference between the standards and achievement of boys and girls or from different ethnic groups.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have been well above average in Years 7 to 9 for the past few years and pupils achieve well.
- The 2004 GCSE results were well the above national average. The highest standards were seen in geography, business studies, physical education and music.
- Learning is supported by the very good relationships which exist between pupils and teachers.
- A-level results in 2004 were above the national average. The highest standards are in English literature, chemistry, French, geography, psychology and information and communication technology.
- The provision for biology in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Years 7 to 9

- 1 Pupils start in Year 7 with standards that are above the national average. By the time they reach the end of Year 9, the results from the national tests show that their attainment is well above average and their achievement is good. Much of the good achievement can be attributed to good teaching and the very good relationships that exist between pupils and teachers. The pupils are very well behaved, stay on task throughout the lessons and this contributes to their good progress. Girls outperform boys overall, but by less than the national trend and there are no significant gender issues. The trend of improvement in the national tests over the last few years has been consistently upwards. In 2004, pupils gained a high proportion of higher grades. Pupils from ethnic minority groups do well and the performance of the largest ethnic minority group showed that they have a pass rate above average. Pupils with Statements for Special Educational Needs achieved as well as other pupils.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004		
Standards in:	School results	National results
English	38.6 (35.7)	n/a (33.4)
Mathematics	39.5 (38.7)	n/a (35.4)
Science	36.8 (36.4)	n/a (33.6)
<i>There were 180 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year</i>		

Years 10 and 11

- 2 Results from the GCSE examination showed that standards are well above the national average for both boys and girls, with girls performing better than boys. These results had shown a steady increase from 2000 until 2003. However, the proportion of pupils who achieved five plus A*-C grades fell in 2004 and was lower than both the targets set by the school and their predictions from testing at the end of Year 9. The number of pupils who achieved the highest grades was similar to the previous year. Over the last few years, the results when compared to similar schools are close to average. A significant number of pupils took their GCSE mathematics in Year 10 and most gained the top A*/A grades. Compared with other subjects, results were better than average in geography, business studies, physical education and music, whilst pupils in history, design and technology, and art and design, did less well than was expected. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils are a significant factor in the overall well above average standards and satisfactory achievement.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004		
	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	65 (70)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (97)	89 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	39.4 (40.9)	34.9 (34.7)
<i>There were 179 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.</i>		

Sixth form

- 3 The table below shows that the number of students gaining passes in the examinations improved overall and was above the national average. In 2003, the percentage of students' gaining the higher levels was considerably above the national average. However, passes at the higher grades A-B show that the school's performance fell below the national average in 2004. Overall, the achievement of students is good. Girls performed better than boys, although this was not the case in all subjects, for example, in mathematics boys achieved better than girls. Subjects in which students performed particularly well include chemistry and mathematics, whilst students performed less well in biology, and much less well in economics. Standards seen in class indicate that good progress and learning result from the very good relations between students and teachers, good teaching, and the hard work put into the subjects by the students themselves. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds performed as well as any other group.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004		
	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.2(95.3)	92.4 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	34.7(40.4)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	264.4(265.0)	265.2 (258.2)
<i>There were 96 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year</i>		

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is **very good** overall. Attendance is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good attitudes to their work, they are keen and enthusiastic learners.
- Pupils behave very well and the school has a friendly, harmonious feel to it.
- The attendance rate is high because pupils enjoy coming to school and their parents value the importance of a good education.
- There is a very wide range of exciting opportunities available to encourage pupils' moral, social and cultural development.
- Spiritual development has improved, but opportunities for purposeful discussion and reflection about 'Thought for the Day' are often missed.

Commentary

- 4 Pupils are a pleasure to teach because they want to learn and are keen and interested in what they are doing. They are good at contributing their opinions, organise themselves well and can be trusted to work independently. For example, in a Year 8 drama lesson on 'inference', when given the freedom to devise their own interpretation of 'Revenge Ballad', they swiftly set to work and soon slipped into character, producing some thoughtful pieces by the end of the lesson. Their behaviour is very good and the school has a pleasant, friendly feel to it.
- 5 Vyners School provides its pupils with extensive valuable opportunities through extra-curricular activities, trips abroad and visits locally. Staff put a lot of energy into providing these activities for pupils. This is one of their strengths and a key ingredient as to why the opportunities for pupils' social, moral and cultural development are so very good. From rugby trips to Canada, an Easter trip to Costa Rica, with the main aim of providing aid, art in New York, and the annual Year 7 residential experience, all are part of this rich tapestry. Sport, music, drama and art all make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. The Swing Band (soon to visit South Africa as part of a reciprocal arrangement) exemplifies pupils at their best.
- 6 Pupils raise considerable amounts of money for charity, and the school strongly encourages this kind of commitment. The first ever cross-curricular day held during the summer, on the theme of 'The Olympics', is another good example of the school's approach to developing moral, social and cultural awareness. Here, pupils (some wearing national costume) were involved in a number of cultural activities, culminating in tutor groups giving presentations on their chosen country.
- 7 Spiritual development has improved since the previous inspection and staff are now more aware of the opportunities created in each subject. The school has recently introduced 'Thought for the day', delivered by form tutors in the morning. It is here where the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Often the 'thought' (for example, 'God loves a cheerful giver') is said in a perfunctory manner, with no chance for reflection or discussion and hence no opportunities for pupils to understand its meaning. This contrasts sharply with an excellent assembly, in which the spiritual quality was very high. This was because of the uplifting quality of the Swing Band, which really set the scene. Added to which, the 'thought' was spoken about with sincerity and belief, and pupils were challenged to think if they gave simply to receive and were, therefore, not a true giver. The school does not fully meet statutory

requirements for providing a daily act of worship because of the inconsistent provision. They are going some way towards the spirit of the law.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2004					
Authorised absence			Unauthorised absence		
School data:	5.6		School data:	0.4	
National data:	7.2		National data:	1.1	
<i>The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.</i>					

- 8 Pupils' attendance is high and well above the national average. This is because parents and their children value education and understand the importance of regular attendance. There is very little unauthorised absence, as parents are diligent in letting the school know reasons why pupils are away. Timekeeping is good and pupils are generally punctual in the mornings and throughout the day.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils		Exclusions in the last school year			
Categories used in the Annual School Census		No of pupils on roll		Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British		909		42	0
White – any other White background		18		1	1
Asian or Asian British – Indian		82		2	0
<i>The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.</i>					

- 9 The number of temporary exclusions are low compared with other schools. Many exclusions are only applied once, and serve as a clear and justifiable marker to indicate the level of behaviour which the school finds totally unacceptable.

Sixth form

- 10 Students are mature, hard working and want to do well. Beyond the classroom, they play an active part in school life. This is one feature the head of sixth form hopes to develop even further. All pupils are expected to fulfil some kind of community service, which they do conscientiously. A notable example is their involvement in the school council. This organisation has initiated a lunchtime 'drop in' run by sixth formers, available for younger pupils who need someone to talk to. They are about to run a new lower school breakfast club and they help with the annual Christmas party for children with medical and learning

disabilities. Attendance and punctuality are very good and students are positive about the sixth form.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is **good**. The overall quality of the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form is **good**. The opportunity for enrichment, including out-of-school activities, is **excellent**. The quality and quantity of accommodation to meet the needs of the curriculum are **satisfactory** overall. Resources to meet the needs of the curriculum are **good**. Arrangements to ensure pupils' care and welfare are **good**. Pupils and sixth form students receive **good** support, advice and guidance. The extent of the school's involvement of pupils and students in its work and development is **very good**. The partnership with parents is **good** and there are **very good** community links. Relationships with other schools and colleges are **good**.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is **good**. The assessment of pupils' work is **satisfactory** in Years 7 to 11 and **good** in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching and the very positive attitudes of the pupils promote their personal development.
- There is insufficient attention to matching work to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities, especially ensuring the most able are sufficiently challenged.
- School reviews ensure that senior staff are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning, but there is insufficient rigorous self-evaluation by some subject leaders to ensure that sufficient challenge exists in all classes.
- There is consistently very good teaching in geography, music and physical education.
- There is no coherent whole-school assessment policy in place to identify under-achievement soon enough for early intervention and support for pupils.

Commentary

- 11 Since the previous inspection, teaching has improved and the incidence of good and very good teaching is much higher. Over recent years, teaching has been particularly effective in Years 7 to 9 and the sixth form, with pupils and students making good progress and achieving well. In Years 10 and 11, teaching has been satisfactory overall, and pupils' achievement has also been satisfactory. During the last few years, improving teaching and learning has been a major focus for staff development, and has been effective with most staff. Improvement to teaching and learning has been accomplished in many subjects. The pupils are positive about the school and the teaching they receive. They are well behaved and have positive attitudes to their work, and good teaching and relationships with staff are making a positive contribution to their personal development.
- 12 During the inspection, 144 lessons were observed. A summary of the teaching is shown in the table below. Overall, teaching and learning are good in all years and there is some very good teaching in most departments. Despite this good profile, the senior staff are aware that there are a number of important issues to be addressed.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 144 lessons						
Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12 (8%)	33 (23%)	69 (48%)	23 (16%)	7 (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.

- 13 The above table indicates a high proportion of good and better teaching, and a relatively low proportion of unsatisfactory lessons. During the inspection, the most effective teaching was observed in the sixth form. Pupils make good progress in most lessons because of their positive attitudes to learning and positive relationships with staff. This good progress in lessons is not always translated into high enough achievement in some departments. Where aspects of teaching are less effective these relate to inadequate planning by teachers to match work more closely to the pupils' abilities, low expectations by teachers of what higher-attaining pupils can achieve, insufficient use of ICT, and assessment systems not sufficiently robust to identify any underachievement early enough for effective intervention and support for pupils.
- 14 In some subjects, there is insufficient rigorous internal review leading to strategies for improvement, but in others this is an improving feature and a strength. There are many examples of good teaching in most departments, but teaching and learning are especially effective in geography, music and physical education. The strengths of teaching include the teachers' very good subject knowledge, positive relationships with students, good use of time and insistence on good behaviour. Teaching in graphics does not sufficiently raise standards and there has been considerable under-achievement during the last few years.
- 15 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and their achievement are good. Pupils' individual education plans contain clear objectives and regularly updated short-term targets. Teaching staff are aware of these pupils' individual needs and their sensitive support contributes to the pupils' good achievement. There are good systems in place to identify pupils with special educational needs, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Annual reviews of the progress of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need are correctly carried out. However, insufficient heed is taken of pupils' targets in some classroom assessments.
- 16 Assessment is satisfactory overall. The school has made assessment a main focus for development and there has been considerable improvement. There is a whole-school marking policy in place and teachers make constructive comments on how pupils can improve their work, but marking is not yet linked to National Curriculum levels. A central electronic system was introduced at the beginning of this academic year to inform teachers' planning and identify targets to be set with pupils. A useful annual assessment and target-setting day is held for parents and pupils. This means that most pupils know at what level they are currently working and what they need to do to improve. However, there is not a robust system in place to identify underachievement early enough for effective intervention with the exception of Year 11.
- 17 The school has made a good progress on the introduction of recent national assessment strategies. Some training has taken place and further training is planned. Departments are developing their own systems and there is some very good practice in science, geography and English. However, departments are currently operating different systems and there is no coherent whole-school assessment policy operating throughout all departments.

Sixth form

- 18 Teaching and learning are good in the sixth form. During the inspection, 36 sixth-form lessons were observed. About two-fifths were very good or excellent, over four-fifths were good or better and all were satisfactory or better. A scrutiny of students' work and talking with students confirmed this good level of teaching and learning. The teaching has improved because of the support given to students on a regular basis. This improved teaching is now having a direct impact on students' achievement and standards of work. Regular feedback on how well students are doing is provided and they are appreciative of this drive to raise standards. Assessment procedures are good in the sixth form and recent changes have improved the support given to students.

The curriculum

The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 13 is **good**. Arrangements for enrichment, including extra-curricular activities, are **excellent**. The quality and quantity of the accommodation are **satisfactory**. Resources to meet the needs of pupils in Years 7 to 13 are **good**. The match of staff to the curriculum is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is an excellent range of cultural and sporting activities, and pupil involvement is very high.
- The school ensures that most pupils have access to a curriculum that suits their needs.
- The school and governors manage the curriculum well and are aware of areas for improvement.
- There is a good range of academic subjects for sixth form students.
- There is a good provision for careers education.

Commentary

- 19 Pupils are provided with a curriculum that meets their needs and aspirations well. Effective links with primary schools give smooth continuity of education for pupils as they transfer into Year 7, but monitoring of what they have studied before they arrive lacks rigour. Good use of ideas from the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has enhanced the range of activities for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum has satisfactory provision for a few vocational courses for Year 10 and 11 pupils.
- 20 The curriculum is managed well and kept under regular review and modified to ensure that the needs of pupils are met. For example, pupils may take their mathematics GCSE examinations early and take AS level in Year 11. Parents are kept well informed about developments. Arrangements for teaching the locally agreed religious education syllabus are good. Teaching of citizenship is well-planned. Opportunities for the application of ICT are good.
- 21 The programme of personal, social and health education is good. A good ethos is cultivated in this course because of the good relationships between adults and pupils. The course successfully covers material relevant to adolescent pupils in drugs and relationships education, helping them to make informed choices about their own lives.
- 22 The large majority of support for pupils with special educational needs is provided within lessons, either by learning support assistants or teaching staff. There is some withdrawal of pupils from lessons for one-to-one support. In all cases the support is effective and leads to the good achievement of these pupils.
- 23 The school has forged good links with Connexions, the service working in partnership with the school to provide guidance for pupils on future pathways. In Year 9, pupils are given useful advice to help them choose examination courses that are well matched to their interests and aptitudes. Pupils in Year 11 are provided with good careers guidance, both from the careers service, and from experienced teachers. Pupils gain valuable work-related experience. This is reported in more detail elsewhere in the report. Good liaison with local colleges and businesses also helps prepare pupils well for the later stages of education and employment.
- 24 Enrichment activities are excellent. Members of staff give freely of their time to run clubs for pupils at lunch times and after school and to provide homework clubs. A diverse range of activities celebrates different cultures well and participation in sports and arts is excellent. Pupils feel that there are enough activities to enrich their experience at school through trips abroad and visits to a wide variety of educational places. There is also a very good range of field trips.

- 25 Overall, accommodation is satisfactory, although it is good in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, ICT, design and technology, and particularly good in physical education, economics/business studies, and the hearing impaired unit. Accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. Most departments have their accommodation as a suite of rooms in one location, however, an exception is that for design and technology. The main entrance to the school is not well designed or signed. There have been significant improvements in the accommodation since the previous inspection. The school has a practical strategic plan of action to continue improving the accommodation. For example, the recently vacated old changing rooms near the centre of the school are planned to be refurbished shortly, to provide a new base for the special educational needs department. The school has made a good audit of accessibility for all. Whilst it covers all key areas, the plan arising from the audit lacks some specialist details. Accommodation and resources for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. However, access within the school is poor for potential pupils with physical disabilities requiring wheelchairs.
- 26 Resources for learning are of a good quality and of sufficient quantity to ensure that pupils have access to the materials they need. Good stocks of textbooks are used and these are supported by a wide range of other good quality, varied and up-to-date resources. The learning resource centre is a very useful room for pupils and students to use. It has a new suite of computers which are in constant use. However, apart from the high level of computer use together with it being an effective study base for pupils, there are very few other non-book resources or services, and the book stock itself is significantly underused. The school is well resourced with ICT equipment. The ratio of pupils per computer is better than the national average.
- 27 The school employs sufficient numbers of good quality staff. Nearly all departments have a full complement of well-qualified specialist teachers, many of excellent quality, including first-class support staff in, for example, science, design and technology and modern foreign languages.

Sixth form

- 28 The school provides a good range of sixth form courses that meet the needs and interests of students. A few vocational courses are on offer to students in the sixth form and the school is considering how it can increase the number and variety of these courses.
- 29 Sixth form students take full advantage of the extensive programme of enrichment and extra-curricular activities available. Provision in the arts and in sport is excellent. These activities considerably enhance learning and encourage students to take on wider school responsibilities. This makes a very strong contribution to students' personal development and helps enhance the positive ethos that exists throughout the school.
- 30 Statutory requirements for religious education are met through the teaching of a religious education module. There is enrichment of students' personal and social development through tutorial programmes. The school also encourages students participation in the school and the wider community by, for example, enabling students to take responsibility and supporting charity work.
- 31 Accommodation for the sixth form to meet their study needs in lessons, private study and socially is satisfactory, but more study and social areas are required as sixth form numbers increase. There are several private study areas and a good level of access to computers throughout the school day. Most departments provide their own book stock and other resources for sixth form study. Staffing is well matched to the needs of sixth form studies.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure pupils' care and welfare are **good** overall. Pupils receive **good** support, advice, and guidance. The extent of the school's involvement of pupils in its work and development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are guided very well towards their choice of career.
- Relationships are positive and friendly. Staff and pupils get on well with each other.
- The school council is high profile and is a strong influence on school practice, resulting in real improvements.
- Review of pupils' progress through academic monitoring days is helping pupils and their parents understand what pupils are doing well and where they need to improve.
- The use of data to monitor pupils' achievement and target those who need extra support is not sufficiently well developed.
- Sixth form students are supported very well.

Commentary

- 32 Pupils, including those with special educational needs, receive good support and advice from staff, who help them to take advantage of all the school is offering. A key strength is the carefully planned careers programme which provides real quality guidance, especially for those in Year 11, who benefit from a comprehensive programme preparing them well for life after GCSE. In addition, an academic monitoring day, held in the autumn term, provides a meaningful chance for parents, pupils, and form tutors to discuss the things working well and where improvements are needed. Relationships in school are positive and friendly and pupils benefit from staff who take an interest in them
- 33 Heads of year maintain a good pastoral overview of their pupils. The school is placing the responsibility on key stage managers to monitor pupils' achievements and detect pupils' under-performance. Whilst a positive start has been made on identifying pupils who are potentially under-performing in Years 10 and 11, the systems in place are time-consuming.
- 34 Child protection procedures are largely effective and staff training is offered regularly. The person responsible is experienced and keeps up to date with current guidelines. During the inspection, some staff were hazy on school procedures. Health and safety systems are good. Responsibilities are delegated to senior staff and there is an annual risk assessment process. The school uses a governor experienced in health and safety well and she makes a useful contribution to the checking processes.
- 35 Staff take any incidents of bullying seriously and pupils are happy with the school's procedures. Recently, the council have discussed ways of making it easier for pupils to get help. The sixth form are making a useful contribution here, offering a new drop in service, which is growing in popularity.
- 36 The school council is very high profile and a real force to be reckoned with. Proper hustings lead to elections and councillors work very hard to secure worthwhile improvements. For example, there has been an increase in the 'healthier options' available at the canteen because of council pressure. Council proposals for amendments to the mobile phone policy were adopted and pupils feel things are working much better, as a result. Year group councils are equally as active as the whole school council, and help spearhead mammoth fundraising events for chosen charities.
- 37 The care, guidance and support for pupils with English as an additional language are satisfactory. However, it is not until recently that sufficient funds have been allocated to support pupils with English as an additional language with the appointment of a learning assistant to support language development. Although recent additional support has been positive and effective, discussion with pupils with English as an additional language, whose needs have only been recently highlighted, commented that they would have appreciated help

in earlier years as they felt at times they had not been coping. Additional sessions during the lunch period have been arranged to help pupils with revision techniques. This is on a voluntary basis and some pupils are reluctant to attend. To overcome this reluctance, the learning support assistant has encouraged pupils to email their work for advice and this is proving successful.

Sixth form

- 38 Students appreciate the very good relationships they have with staff who guide them well during their time in the sixth form. They speak highly of the improvements made by the new head of sixth form. New individual guidance sessions with tutors are a clear improvement to the support systems. The introduction of a study room with timetabled private study periods for Year 13 students is another positive improvement. Students speak of wanting a better induction into the sixth form, including the chance to sample taster courses. This is a valid comment and there are plans for just this kind of arrangement for the new Year 11 intake. Students have their own voice through their sixth form council and their opinions are respected and accommodated, if at all possible.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are **good**. Relationships with the community are **very good**. Partnerships with other educational establishments are **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the school and hold it in high regard. It is overwhelmingly oversubscribed.
- The school has worked hard to improve its relationships with parents. Information, especially through newsletters and the web site, is particularly good.
- There are an especially good number of chances for parents to visit the school and talk with staff about how their children are progressing.
- The school's positive profile in the community is growing. Contacts with local groups and organisations are really helping pupils' personal development.
- The partnership with other schools, as part of specialist college work, is strong in mathematics.
- There is insufficient liaison with primary schools with regard to English and science

Commentary

- 39 Parents correctly recognise the good quality education at Vyners School. They provide a high level of support for their children's education, which is translated into an equally high level of support for the school. For example, the parents' group 'Friends of Vyners' raises considerable amounts of money for the benefit of the pupils. The school is highly regarded in the locality and massively oversubscribed. Approximately only one child in five gets a place.
- 40 Information for parents has improved in recent times. Governors are pro-active in consulting with parents about what the school is offering, and the largely positive results of their own questionnaire, sent last term, were used as part of the inspection evidence. Governors and staff have placed greater emphasis on improving the quality of communications, with a good degree of success. The web site, still developing, gives a good amount of relevant information of the sort that parents often want, and monthly newsletters provide a myriad of upbeat messages, really showing what an active and vibrant place this is to learn in.
- 41 Parents have high expectations about the amount of information they wish to know regarding their children's progress. The school is responding well to this. As well as an academic review day, where parents, pupil and tutor meet to discuss how things are going and set targets, there is also the option for parents to attend a follow-up meeting, if they wish. This is in addition to the 'usual' type of parents' evening, where subject teachers are on hand. The

school has pledged to get back to any parent who contacts them, on the same day. This is indicative of their partnership approach.

- 42 The school's role in the local community has grown considerably and is now very strong. Pupils are encouraged to get involved in a wide range of activities, all of which are helping their personal and social development, and in fact, they receive school awards for their community work. Largely focussing on involvement in local groups and organisations, it ranges from pupils helping local charities, the Sarah-Marie Foundation, for example, environmental projects, through to petitions and video campaigning for a skate park, to the acclaimed Vyners Swing Band performing at local, national and international events. There is a strong partnership with Hillingdon Adult Education College providing ICT courses, initiated by specialist college work.
- 43 Relating to their links as a specialist college, mathematics is good and much stronger than the ICT element. This is largely due to staffing circumstances in the ICT department. ICT developments currently involve primary schools receiving equipment and a technician supporting one school with weekly visits. Mathematics links are making a positive impact on the levels of skills and expertise of pupils and staff of partner primary and other secondary schools, mainly through after-school sessions and Saturday morning workshops, but also through good practice being discussed and shared.
- 44 There are good transfer arrangements for pupils entering Year 7. The head of Year 7 is very experienced and has established good relationships with local primary schools. Curricular links between 'core' departments of science and English are limited and insufficiently developed.
- 45 The good relationships with parents seen in the main school are replicated in the sixth form. Parents are invited to carefully timed parents' evenings, and the quality of information in the sixth form prospectus is good. Links with the community are extensive. Sixth formers are encouraged to undertake some kind of community involvement, and nearly everyone does. The school has established strong links with other colleges and schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The governance of the school is **good**. The headteacher provides **good** leadership. Other key staff with management responsibilities provide **good** leadership. The overall effectiveness of leadership and management throughout the school is **good**. The school is aware of any barriers to raising achievement and has **satisfactory** strategies to overcome them. Leadership and management of the sixth form are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides strong leadership to the school.
- The effective senior leadership team provides very good support to the school.
- Governors are very effective in helping shape the future of the school.
- There is good management of the school's finances.
- Procedures for monitoring some whole-school policies lack rigour and consistency.
- The policies of the new head of sixth form are making a strong impact on students' personal development.
- The leadership and management of physical education, music, citizenship and geography are very good, but management of post-16 biology has been unsatisfactory.
- Statutory requirements for collective worship are not fully met despite recent improvements.

Commentary

- 46 The overall quality of governance is good. The governing body is very well led and serves the school very well. Governors are involved in the life of the school and are very committed to ensuring it success. There is a good balance of skills and expertise among their membership, which is used wisely for the benefit of the school. They share a corporate vision and set the

strategic direction for the school. They act as a critical friend, providing support and challenge where they feel it necessary. The governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their comprehensive committee structure keeps them well informed of developments in school. Although the governors have ensured the provision for spiritual development has improved through a 'Thought for the day', they have not ensured that the school fully meets its statutory obligations in relation to the provision for a daily act of worship. However, the quality of assemblies has improved since the previous inspection.

- 47 The school benefits from the strong leadership of the governors, headteacher and senior management team. This has ensured a good quality education, well above average attainment and high standards of behaviour and personal education. The good leadership of the headteacher has a positive influence on the school. He has a clear direction and sense of purpose for the school and has overseen considerable improvements since the previous inspection. These include the school gaining specialist mathematics and computer status, improved examination results, enhanced accommodation and an enlargement of the hearing impaired unit. The headteacher has a visible presence around the school and is very accessible to parents, students and staff. He is closely in touch with day-to-day events, and very active in setting the tone and direction of the school. He supports staff well in taking on new initiatives and developments that will provide pupils with a wide range of educational opportunities.
- 48 The headteacher has established a strong and effective leadership team, all of whom have clear responsibilities and share a commitment to raising standards. The roles of this recently expanded team have been adjusted and have resulted in the day-to-day organization of the school being much more effective. The members of the team bring a range of skills and experiences that complement each other. They are very supportive of each other and the headteacher.
- 49 The quality of management is good. The previous inspection report expressed concerns about the monitoring of teaching and learning through individual subjects. This has improved and there is now a framework for departmental reviews. Middle managers are closely involved in this process, but a more rigorous approach would ensure that areas in need of support are identified quickly. Management is most effective in geography, physical education, music and citizenship. The school has also developed clear self-evaluation strategies, and the school improvement plan is an effective working document with an appropriate framework for action across all levels of school life. However, some of the procedures for reviewing patterns and taking action to raise achievement lack sufficient rigour and consistency of application in some areas. These include assessment and target setting. The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection and has addressed successfully all the key issues contained in the previous report.
- 50 Leadership and management of the department for pupils with special educational needs are good. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. The co-ordinator leads an effective team of teaching assistants who make a significant contribution to the good achievement of the pupils they support. There are also effective systems within departments to support pupils with special educational needs. All staff within the special educational needs department have undertaken a good range of relevant training courses. Good use is made of visiting specialist help. However, the co-ordinator spends too much time on administrative tasks rather than on the direct support of pupils. There is too little co-ordination between the special needs department and the resource base for hearing-impaired pupils. This has an impact on the overall deployment of teaching assistants, and pupils' individual education plans from the two areas have a different format and quality. There has been considerable improvement to the provision for special educational needs since the previous inspection, at which time provision was deemed to be unsatisfactory. Overall provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- 51 The school makes good provision for the professional development of all teaching staff and has effective systems for performance management. The quality of the induction programme

for new staff, including newly qualified teachers, is very good. The school also uses a range of strategies to ensure that it is fully staffed by specialist teachers.

- 52 Financial management is good. The finance manager oversees the school budget efficiently and applies principles of best value rigorously. Governors are fully involved in monitoring the budget and have a clear vision for the school's future well-being. A large under-spend is fully accounted for and due to capital grants not being debited until the following financial year. Funding for pupils with special educational needs is used effectively.

Financial information

<i>Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004</i>			
Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,959,434	Balance from previous year	314,095
Total expenditure	4,670,690	Balance carried forward to the next	602,839
Expenditure per pupil	4,444		

- 53 The management of pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory. Until recently, there has not been sufficient funding available for pupils to benefit from any additional support. These additional funds have been used to employ a teaching assistant to support pupils' language development. The amount of additional help needed is decided by the support teacher. This additional support is not co-ordinated or monitored to ensure that pupils attend the lunchtime sessions provided to make sure that they benefit from the help offered. The few pupils to join school who have English language skills that are below the expected level are tested by the special needs department, but their specific language needs are not sufficiently diagnosed.

Sixth form

- 54 The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. There is a clear vision for the development of the sixth form, centred on providing the highest standard of care and guidance. The change to a mixed Year 12/13 tutorial system is promoting a greater sense of corporateness, enhancing social contact between the years, and preparing the sixth form for a greater role in the school and community. The programme of one-to-one interviews in tutorial time is enabling tutors to monitor students' progress, negotiate targets, and guide their future planning more rigorously. Relationships between staff and students are very positive. Some changes to the rules of attendance have proved less favourable than previously, but students have appreciated the openness of the head of sixth form in seeking their views and explaining the reasons for the changes. They respect his position and have given their full support. There is particularly strong leadership and management in psychology, chemistry, geography and physical education. The school is aware of unsatisfactory management in sixth form biology and has already begun to address the former weaknesses.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

Provision for work-related learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management are developing the curriculum effectively.

- Pupils in Year 10 follow a good work-experience programme that enables them to learn effectively through work placements.
- There is a very good policy for careers education and guidance that supports pupils well.

Commentary

- 55 The leadership and management of work-related learning are good. The school is successfully following national guidance and statutory requirements are being met. Many subjects have work-related learning issues embedded in lesson plans, and a good range of visits is organised. The way pupils demonstrate skills, attitudes and qualities that are valued in the workplace is monitored and reported well. The effective provision is contributing to pupils' achievement in several subjects.
- 56 Learning through work is already firmly established in the school and is being further improved through the vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. The school has a well-developed programme of work experience for all pupils in Year 10, and this has a good impact on their personal development. The tutorial programme provides very good support and guidance for pupils undertaking their work placements. There is a good programme of college placements for pupils in Years 10 and 11, but places are limited. The work in business studies makes a substantial contribution to work-related learning.
- 57 Learning about work is developed well through a very good policy for careers education and guidance. There is a high-quality annual careers convention. The vocational courses in ICT and art and design have been successfully introduced into Year 10. They are effective in enabling pupils to learn about work. Activities to support learning about work in most other subject areas are well developed.

Hearing Impaired Unit

- 58 Provision for pupils with hearing impairment is good. Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils has risen from 11 to 18. Many pupils have additional learning difficulties to their hearing impairment. Pupils' achievement is good and they make good progress in lessons. They have a positive attitude to their work and a determination to succeed. In class, they work well with teachers and the learning support assistants who use a variety of methods to communicate with them effectively. Pupils do not always make sufficient use of the help offered by the other pupils. The leadership and management of the unit are good, and staff work as a cohesive team. There is very good collaboration with the speech and language therapist who provides excellent advice about assessment information. However, the unit does not use this information sufficiently in setting targets in the individual educational plans, which still lack precision and, therefore, provide insufficient feedback on pupils' progress. The accommodation and resources in the unit are very good and pupils are eager to use them at lunchtime and after school.

Specialist mathematics and ICT status

- 59 The school is now in its second year as a specialist mathematics and computing college. It has used this opportunity to enhance the learning of its pupils using a number of different strategies. The funding received from the specialist college status has funded a community-use wing comprising a new ICT room and an ICT equipped maths room together with interactive whiteboards and three sets of wireless laptops that increase pupils' access to ICT. It has also been the catalyst for drawing in additional funds that have been used to complete the first floor of the new wing to provide a sixth form study area, a conference room and three offices. As a result of these developments, pupils' learning opportunities have increased with this new equipment and pupils say that they regularly use computers as a part of their learning environment.

- 60 The school has appointed an advanced skills teacher who has provided expertise both within the school and within other neighbouring schools. The mathematics and ICT departments have benefited from training and extra equipment. Money has also been provided for whole-school training, and primary school partners have benefited by provision of ICT equipment, technician time and participation in mathematics master classes.

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 **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work throughout the school are above average and students achieve well.
- Work is not sufficiently matched to meet the needs of the lower and higher-attaining pupils and this restricts their achievement.
- Pupils behave well and have a positive attitude to learning.
- There is insufficient use of ICT which limits the range of learning opportunities.
- Marking is thorough and pupils are taught to assess their own work.

Commentary

- 61 Pupils enter the school with above average literacy skills. Pupils make good progress and standards by the end of Year 9 have been well above the national average for the last few years. However, the national test results improved significantly in 2004 and were well above average compared to pupils with similar prior attainment. Girls outperform boys, but to less of an extent than the national trend. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well, and good teaching enables them to enjoy challenging literature texts such as 'Much Ado about Nothing'. The quality of pupils' writing varies considerably, with the most able pupils producing good extended writing for a range of purposes and audiences. Pupils are confident speakers and are keen to answer questions and present their work to others. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with a hearing impairment, make good progress and achieve well. There are very few pupils who are at early stages of acquiring the English language and pupils from minority ethnic groups do as well as other pupils.
- 62 GCSE results in 2004 in English were above the national average. However, the proportion attaining A* and A grades was lower than average. Girls performed significantly better than boys. Results in English literature and drama were well above the national average. Pupils start Year 10 with very well developed literacy skills and continue to make good progress. However, the work set does not always match the needs and abilities of the lower and higher-attaining pupils. Overall, the achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory
- 63 By Year 11, pupils have a good knowledge of the books they are studying for GCSE. They have a good grasp of the plot, characters and style of 'Of Mice and Men' and can analyse a broadsheet newspaper article to understand how it achieves its effects. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own and each other's work against examination criteria in order to improve standards of writing which contributes to the good results. Teachers ensure that pupils support their arguments with good evidence and quotations from the text. Where ICT is incorporated into lessons it engages and motivates pupils and raises their attainment, but computers are not used enough in teaching and learning English.
- 64 Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good knowledge of syllabus requirements and prepare pupils well for examinations. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, and teachers support pupils well giving them the confidence to succeed. Marking is thorough and gives detailed advice on how pupils could improve further. However, there is little planning to meet the needs of lower or higher-attaining pupils to ensure that they make good progress. Teacher-led question-and-answer sessions are a feature of most lessons, but little is done to foster independent learning

- 65 Leadership is good. The well-qualified team of staff share a common vision and purpose for the department and contribute to its development. Management is satisfactory and the curriculum is broad and balanced, except that pupils have few opportunities for using ICT. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are taught drama, which contributes to their confidence in speaking and listening, but the links made between drama and English at GCSE are not strong enough. The use of data from assessment is not sufficiently refined to support planning and staff in the department do not have the opportunity to observe each other's lessons in order to share good practice. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

- 66 The language and literacy skills of the pupils are generally high and do not inhibit access to any curriculum areas. The school's literacy policy is being implemented well in all subjects. Representatives from most subjects meet regularly to share good practice, and a wide range of strategies has been developed to support written work.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE are above average.
- Leadership is providing clear vision and direction.
- Pupils receive regular assessment of their progress and targets for improvement.
- ICT is not currently used to its full potential for supporting pupils' learning.

Commentary

- 67 Pupils start school with varied experience in speaking a foreign language, but their general literacy skills are above average. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 showed standards were above national averages. GCSE results in 2004 were above national averages in French, and well above in German, with all pupils attaining a pass grade. This represents an improvement over the previous year.
- 68 A large majority of pupils in the current Year 9 have already attained, or are on course to attain, the nationally expected level. Standards are above average, and achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Lower and middle attaining pupils are using the past and future tense, but are not yet using them consistently in extended writing and speaking. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in smaller sets. They speak and write confidently in longer sentences, and show good recall of previous learning and grammar.
- 69 In Years 10 and 11, achievement is satisfactory, as pupils are maintaining the above average standards attained in Year 9. Written coursework and preparation for the speaking test show a high majority of pupils attaining at or above expectations. Higher attaining pupils are producing long, highly accurate pieces of work with a wide range of vocabulary and construction. Middle and lower attaining pupils are showing sound progress over the course in improving the quality and range of their final drafts.
- 70 Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are expert or native speakers of the foreign language. There is very good planning. Lessons are well structured, and activities are varied and well graduated to ensure that pupils continue to be challenged. Teachers constantly promote literacy skills in awareness of grammar and constructions, especially in German. The department uses its three foreign language assistants effectively to support pupils' speaking. Homework is used well to consolidate and extend pupils' learning. Assessment is good. Day-to-day marking sets short-term improvement targets, while systematic recording tracks progress, attainment levels and longer-term targets for improving performance.

- 71 Leadership and management of the department are good. There are firm policies and teaching strategies in place. The recently appointed head of department has now established a supportive, coherent and committed team, an improvement since the previous inspection. Priorities, such as using assessment to give boys clearer direction and firmer goals to aim for, are well established. The use of ICT to support pupils' learning has been enhanced with the installation of an interactive whiteboard, and the department encourages pupils to use the available language software independently. However, planning for its more regular and formal use in lessons is insufficiently rigorous. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching take place under the normal arrangements for performance management, but teachers do not have enough opportunity to observe each other and share good practice in other contexts.
- 72 Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The lowest and highest attaining pupils are aided by setting and suitably adapted materials, as well as by more suitable courses. Teachers teach well in restricted surroundings, but they are no longer drab, being enhanced with effective displays of pupils' work, including the work from the many trips available to all years.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and this ensures pupils learn well overall.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils enhance pupils' learning.
- Leadership and management are good and there is clear focus to raise standards.
- Effective use is made of teaching assistants to support pupils with special educational needs.
- Good use is made of ICT within lessons.

Commentary

- 73 Pupils enter the school with above average mathematical skills. The results for the Year 9 national tests in 2004 were well above average, reflecting the good achievement of the pupils in Years 7 to 9. These results have shown a steady increase over the last few years and recently boys have achieved better than girls. The results in mathematics were better than those in the other core subjects. GCSE results in 2004 were well above average, although the results were lower than the previous year, with boys performing slightly better than girls. Practically all the higher attaining pupils who took GCSE a year early in Year 10 attained A*/A grades. Good results were also obtained by a group of high attaining pupils who took GCSE statistics. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- 74 From work seen in lessons and from a survey of pupils' books, it can be seen that pupils take a pride in the presentation of their work. There is little difference in the quality of boys' and girls' work. High attaining pupils work well and courses are structured so that they are provided with a high level of challenge. The highest attaining pupils are encouraged to take their mathematics GCSE at the end of Year 10 and this demonstrates the drive for high standards in the department. Pupils with special educational needs are supported especially well. In a Year 7 lesson for pupils with special educational needs, they were achieving well because of the help of two teaching assistants and two sixth form students who were helping the class as part of their community action programme. The clever use of the interactive whiteboard by the teacher, and the care and attention of the assistants allowed all of these pupils to achieve better than might have been expected. There was no difference in the achievements of pupils from ethnic minorities throughout the inspection.
- 75 In Years 7 to 11, teaching and learning are good. Teachers are enthusiastic about mathematics, know their subject well, and are able to explain it clearly. Pupils' learning is improved by lessons which are well planned and conducted with pace. Teachers use their time efficiently by focused use of questions to ensure that all pupils achieve at their highest

potential. Homework is set regularly, is well marked, and is used effectively to extend learning. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils, and the very good attitude of pupils, are at the core of the pupils' success in understanding and learning. Pupils learn well because they listen and participate fully in the lesson. The use of ICT is a strength within the department. All of the rooms have electronic smart boards and data projectors, and these are used consistently and imaginatively to enhance learning.

- 76 Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department is a good role model who has a clear vision of where he wants the department to go, and his dedicated team provide him with their full support. The department has regular meetings which have teaching and learning as their main focus. Schemes of work are constantly being revised and linked to a new assessment system that allows teachers to monitor progress and provide pupils with targets for future learning. Monitoring of staff is carried out on a regular basis with the results fed back to raise the standards within the department. The department is a key component of the specialist school status and as such is involved in initiatives such as the spreading of good practice throughout the school and liaison with local primary and secondary schools. The improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

- 77 The use of numeracy across the curriculum is very good. A good school policy for numeracy is overseen by a co-ordinator who has worked with other departments to ensure it is implemented effectively throughout the curriculum. This was emphasised in a staff training day when teachers were invited to identify where they taught mathematics in their courses. In other subjects, good examples were observed in science where the pupils were able to calculate kinetic and potential energies of objects, their speeds, and pupils are well practised in the drawing of graphs. In food technology lessons, pupils use nutritional analysis methods to calculate quantities of foods for different sized menus and calculate their costs.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' work is very well assessed and this helps them to improve.
- Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects.
- Lack of use of ICT for teaching limits the pace of learning in some lessons.
- Good management and very good pupils' attitudes have led to an improvement in standards.

Commentary

- 78 Standards are well above average and achievement is good in all years. Pupils enter school with above average standards. By the end of Year 9, they reach well above average standards in the national tests, representing good achievement. GCSE science examination results in 2004 showed that standards were maintained and were well above average. Achievement in lessons is also good. Boys and girls make similar progress. Pupils with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented achieve well, as do pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. The trend in standards over the past four years has been upward. The achievement of pupils is largely due to their very good attitude to learning.
- 79 Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They plan their lessons well and there is good encouragement of pupils, leading to high expectation and challenge by Year 11. Assessment of pupils' work is very good because it gives them very good appreciation of how they could improve. Pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding through effective teaching, particularly in practical investigations. Lack of ICT and a variety of resources in most classes results in slower pace and fewer learning

opportunities than would be available if they had them. Many teachers use whiteboards well, but the pens are often too faint to read and this causes some frustration amongst pupils.

- 80 Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a good understanding of the curriculum requirements and has built up a good team of teachers who are supported well. Teaching is monitored well, and effective action is taken to improve teachers' performance. There is a good understanding of how the department can improve, and good systems are in place to monitor the achievement of all pupils. The overall leadership of the technicians lacks some co-ordination as there is no senior technician. However, they work effectively and provide a very good service.
- 81 There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. ICT is now embedded in the science curriculum and behaviour management is very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' positive attitudes and the national strategy for ICT are raising standards.
- The good starter sessions and activities quickly engage pupils' interest and lead to good learning.
- Expectations on occasions are not high enough and planning lacks challenging activities for pupils to aspire to higher standards.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the use of ICT beyond the school.

Commentary

- 82 Teachers' assessments in 2004 at the end of Year 9 showed that standards were above average. These results reflect the quality of work seen that was above average. In the 2004 GCSE ICT full-course examination, results were slightly above the national average. In the short course ICT examination 97 per cent of the pupils entered achieved a pass grade. There are no national statistics available for the ICT short course to be able to make a national comparison. The overall results have shown an upward trend during previous years. By the end of Year 11 pupils attain above average standards.
- 83 Pupils join the school in Year 7 with well-established presentation skills. Their understanding and knowledge of the other elements of ICT, however, are varied and generally below the expected level. With the benefit of the ICT national strategy and the pupils' positive attitudes to the subject, their attainment is close to the national average by Year 9. Pupils continue to build on their existing presentation skills confidently using a range of applications to present information, and their achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. Pupils have developed a sound understanding of the use of a spreadsheet to model situations. They are familiar with the formulae for mathematical calculations and are able to give examples of where spreadsheets might be used beyond school. Although pupils have an understanding of handling data, this element is not so well developed.
- 84 Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. This is due partially to lower expectations by teachers and a lack of rigour to encourage pupils to reach higher standards and build on their established knowledge. Pupils in the GCSE groups are, however, at the level normally seen at this point in the academic year. Pupils have continued to develop their knowledge of spreadsheets adapting them for use in real situations. Higher-attaining pupils use more advanced procedures, such as the 'look up' and 'if' procedures. Pupils are familiar with the data-handling program and appreciate that the data has to be entered into different fields (areas on the program where data is placed) to be able to use the query feature to successfully filter information. Pupils have an appreciation that information entered has to be

validated and verified to ensure accuracy but again pupils' knowledge is inconsistent between teaching groups.

- 85 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. A good feature of the teaching is the starter activities. The outcome of this is that lessons start briskly and pupils' interest is quickly captured contributing positively to their progress and learning. Teachers generally have good specialist knowledge and use their expertise effectively to ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of the appropriate procedures and tasks. This expertise, however, is not consistent. When teachers are unfamiliar with particular elements of the national strategy, the outcome is that pupils are confused about the tasks resulting in slower learning. Teachers manage pupils well, insisting on quiet when explaining procedures, allowing lessons to proceed without interruption promoting positive learning. Teachers move around the class effectively, intervening when required, helping pupils and advising on the next stage of learning. Teaching is less effective, however, when expectations are not high enough, or when planning lacks clear targets for pupils to aspire to with insufficient challenging tasks, resulting in pupils becoming restless, losing interest and slowing learning.
- 86 The leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has been in role for a relatively short time and has yet to have an impact. He has, however, a clear vision about the future developments of the subject, an appreciation of the weaknesses of the subject and has already put into place strategies to raise standards. The improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The increased time allocated for the subject, a more balanced curriculum and the increased use of ICT across the curriculum are all contributing to the raising of standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

- 87 At the previous inspection, the use of ICT across the curriculum was judged to be poor with limited co-ordination and tracking of what pupils could do. Since then, there has been a significant investment in ICT with increased and improved resources. The recently purchased laptops have also eased the problems of accessibility to the well-used computer suites. As a consequence, the use in other subjects to support pupils' learning has shown a considerable improvement since the previous inspection and is now good overall. Most subjects have identified in their schemes of work how ICT can be used effectively to support pupils' learning. The most effective use of ICT has been with the interactive whiteboards that are being used by an increasing number of teachers, contributing positively to the pace of lessons and pupils' learning. An example of this was in a mathematics lesson. Here, using the facilities of the interactive whiteboard, the teacher was able to effectively feed in numbers to get instant results helping pupils to understand a series of number bonds. All subjects are encouraging pupils to use the Internet for research to develop pupils' independent learning. The only subject not to have fully embraced the use of ICT is music where the lack of suitable hardware and software has inhibited progress.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average and pupils achieve well.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes to their learning.
- The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good.
- The department is led and managed well.
- There are few visits to places of historical interest.

Commentary

- 88 In lessons seen and work analysed during the inspection, standards are above those expected nationally by the end of Year 9 and this represents satisfactory achievement in terms of pupils' prior attainment. All pupils acquire historical skills rapidly from Year 7 onwards and higher attaining pupils in particular express their ideas well in written work. In this context, some very impressive projects were seen from Year 9 pupils on changes during the Industrial Revolution. Lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, are very well supported in their learning with appropriate materials and extra help in the classroom.
- 89 The most recent GCSE examination results were below the national average and the performance of boys was well below national norms. A major contributory factor to this was the considerable staffing difficulties experienced by the department. Strenuous efforts have been made to remedy this situation, and the current cohort of pupils studying history in Years 10 and 11 are reaching standards that are well above the national average. All pupils achieve well in terms of their prior attainment at this stage and some very detailed and analytical writing was seen from Year 11 pupils on the seeds of the Russian Revolution.
- 90 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is sometimes very good or excellent. Lessons are planned thoroughly and all pupils are encouraged to become active participants in lessons. This has addressed an issue arising from the previous report about the preponderance of teacher-directed lessons. Classroom management is very strong, and teachers use their subject knowledge well to stimulate all pupils. Lessons are conducted with pace and rigour so that pupils are given the opportunity to make rapid gains in their learning. For their own part, pupils are very positive in their attitudes and keen to engage in debate and discussion. They are encouraged to do so through a variety of teaching and learning techniques, including role play, group work, music and ICT.
- 91 The department is led and managed well, and there is a very strong sense of teamwork. The concerns raised in the previous report about the lack of planning and target-setting no longer apply. Marking of pupils' work is thorough, and ICT is playing a major role in the work of the department. Pupils have limited opportunities, however, to enrich their learning by visiting places of historical interest. Overall, good progress has been made since the previous inspection. History is a very popular subject in the school and has a very dedicated and enthusiastic teaching team.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very well planned lessons aid high-quality teaching.
- Very good leadership and management of the department are maintaining high standards.
- All teachers are subject specialists who use their knowledge well to make learning interesting.
- Teachers work effectively as a team.
- Assessment procedures are very good.

Commentary

- 92 Pupils' level of attainment when starting Year 7 is average. Standards of work in the current Year 9 are above average. This confirms the 2004 teachers' assessments. The curriculum is interesting and pupils produce a vast range of good-quality work, including extended pieces of writing. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the key aspects of physical and human geography. Pupils frequently use, and gain a good understanding of, different kinds of maps.

- 93 In 2004, GCSE results were well above average. Standards are being maintained at a very high level year-on-year. Boys and girls attain similar standards, however, more girls gain the higher A*/A grades than boys. Over recent years, GCSE results show that pupils gain significantly higher results in geography than when comparing results nationally.
- 94 The achievement of pupils in all years is good. At GCSE, pupils perform better in geography than in almost any of their other school subjects. This is the result of the very effective way in which the department is led and managed, which in turn is helping to ensure a consistently high level of good-quality planning and teaching. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is also good. Pupils of different abilities and from different backgrounds achieve equally well.
- 95 The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good and very good in Years 10 and 11. Some lessons are of an excellent quality. Teachers know their geography very well and, both individually and as a team, devise a wide variety of activities that interest and motivate pupils. Teachers are committed and enthusiastic. Relationships and attitudes of the pupils to learning are very good. Although ICT is used in geography, and most effectively through the use of the interactive whiteboard, there is less than expected use of ICT in geographical learning. Pupils cope very well with the high level of numeracy skills required in geography. Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond positively. Their approach to learning, high quality of presentation of their work and attention to homework tasks are examples of this. Pupils develop their enquiry and critical thinking skills well as a consequence of the quality and range of geographical tasks presented both in class and when learning takes place outside the classroom. Assessment procedures, including the marking of pupils' work, are thorough, accurate and ensure that pupils know how they are progressing and how to improve.
- 96 Leadership and management of the department are very good. The department has a very good team of teachers who, through the head of department, work as an effective team by engaging in curriculum development tasks and assessment of pupils' work across year groups. Consequently, teachers know the quality of work produced by pupils in their own and other classes, enabling them to successfully identify and agree pieces of work, which show specific levels of pupils' attainment. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, even though the department was performing well at that time.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and achievement are good in all year groups.
- Assessment practice is not yet consistently contributing to raising standards.
- The work set is not always well matched to pupils' abilities, especially the lower attaining groups.
- Leadership of the subject is very good.

Commentary

- 97 Pupils come to the school with standards below those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils' previous experience of religious education varies considerably depending on the primary school attended, but most pupils report having done little religious education in Year 6. During Years 7 to 9, pupils make good progress and achieve well so that by the end of Year 9 they are typically in line with the expectations of the agreed syllabus. During Years 10 and 11, all pupils follow a GCSE examination syllabus, most doing the short course, but a small option group in Year 11 is following the full course. In last year's GCSE examinations, pupils from the school obtained better results than the national average. Current pupils appear to be on course to achieve even better than last year's results. Therefore, standards in Years 10

and 11 exceed national expectations. Achievement in religious education is good in all year groups.

- 98 Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. The subject is taught by two specialist teachers. Lessons are well planned to interest and enthuse pupils. Pupils respond by exhibiting good attitudes towards the subject and, usually, lessons proceed briskly. Teachers make good use of artefacts and video material, and pupils have opportunities to use computers both for research and to present their work. A weakness is that the same teaching material is used in all classes within a year group and for all pupils within each class and so is not always well matched to pupils' individual needs. In some lessons, there were good examples of teachers supporting lower attaining pupils and enabling them to cope with work that might have otherwise been too difficult. However, higher attaining pupils are sometimes not challenged as effectively as they might be. To some extent, this is compensated for by open-ended homework assignments that allow and encourage pupils to demonstrate the breadth and depth of their knowledge and understanding.
- 99 Assessment of pupils' work is an area of relative weakness. Marking is always supportive and seeks to be helpful. However, too many comments are insufficiently specific to allow pupils to understand what they must do to improve. For pupils in Years 7 to 9, it is not always clear what the criteria for assessment are, and there are some inconsistencies in levels awarded to the quality of work.
- 100 Leadership and management of the subject are good overall, with leadership being very good. The head of department has worked extremely hard, and effectively, in the time she has been in the school. She has produced schemes of work that fully meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and all her documentation is exemplary in its clarity and comprehensiveness. She is very effective in her support for the newly qualified teacher. Departmental self-evaluation and the use of data to improve standards are both at an early stage of development and are priorities for development. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. The positive features identified in the previous report have been sustained whilst standards and achievement in Years 10 and 11 have improved.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- 2004 GCSE results for food technology were above average and pupils achieve well.
- 2004 GCSE results for graphic communication were well below average and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils produce very good quality practical work when working with resistant materials.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have insufficient skills in some elements of product design and insufficient knowledge of the use of computer-aided manufacture.

Commentary

- 101 Pupils start school with standards close to the national average. By the end of Year 9, the overall standards of work of boys and girls are at the levels expected nationally, which represents satisfactory achievement from their starting point. Teachers' assessments and inspection evidence show that a much higher than average percentage of pupils reach these levels. However, they have insufficient skills in developing their own product design ideas. More competent pupils have very good practical skills and produce items of high quality. Lower attaining pupils have insufficient understanding of the materials with which they work. Pupils make good use of ICT for research, for example, into mechanisms and for nutritional analysis. They have insufficient knowledge of how to use computer-aided manufacture.

- 102 The 2004 GCSE results were average, as at the time of the previous inspection. Girls' results were better than boys'. Food technology results were above average, but those for graphic products were well below average and similar to previous years. Overall, the standards of work of boys and girls in Years 10 and 11 seen during the inspection are average, representing satisfactory achievement. More competent pupils have good skills in the use of computer-aided design. Less competent pupils do not always show the links between stages in the design process. In all years, pupils develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills to good effect.
- 103 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching in graphics has not ensured pupils make adequate progress and many underachieve. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which is applied well in the majority of lessons, for example, by the skilled use of questions to extend pupils' understanding. Marking of pupils' work is good, giving clear guidance on how their work can be improved. There are good relationships between teachers and pupils. These lead to pupils' good attitudes to learning, which contribute to their satisfactory achievement. Some lessons in Years 7 to 9 are less successful where insufficient stress is given to elements of product design. Teachers give good support to pupils who have special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, and those for whom English is an additional language. This enables these pupils to achieve as well as others.
- 104 The overall leadership of design and technology is satisfactory and management is good. The joint heads of department work very hard and lead their sections well. There has been some good collaboration between them, for example, to produce high-quality departmental documentation. However, there are still some important issues to address, such as the planning in Years 7 to 9 to demonstrate that all elements of National Curriculum requirements are correctly and fully met. There is a recently established system for tracking Years 7 to 9 pupils' progress across the different specialist areas, but this is not yet fully effective. Measures taken to raise attainment in graphic products were not effective for the 2004 GCSE examinations and this is an area of considerable weakness. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory, but does not include any vocational courses. Improvement to provision since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 11 are rising.
- Teachers have a very good command of the subject and engage their pupils very well.
- Pupils show very good attitudes to their work and behave very well.
- The marking of pupils' work is not consistent and pupils are not always sure what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

- 105 On entry to the school, standards in art and design are average. By the end of Years 9 and 11, pupils attain average standards and they achieve satisfactorily. In 2004, GCSE results were well below average, with girls doing better than boys. The results overall during the last four years indicate standards have been close to the national average.
- 106 Inspection evidence shows that standards are starting to rise throughout the school. In Year 9, standards of work are at the national average. Supported by a good quality of teaching and learning, Year 11 pupils this year have improved upon the 2004 well below average results and they are now once again on track to attaining average standards. The achievement of the

pupils in all years is satisfactory. Boys' standards are improving and are now nearer the standards of girls. Most pupils show a very good command of technique and the media they are using. Standards fall when pupils do not consistently and sufficiently justify and evaluate their work and say how it has been influenced by the wide range of artists they study. Good attention is given to developing the spiritual, social, moral and cultural aspects of the subject and literacy skills and how the aspects of art they study relate to citizenship.

- 107 Teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. Teachers use their subject expertise very well, thoroughly evaluating the pupils' progress in lessons. Pupils show very good attitudes and behave very well. Homework is set well, but not always marked thoroughly. The present means of assessment, although satisfactory overall, shares too briefly with the pupils what they need to do to further improve their work. Pupils are unsure about the level and grade they are attaining for their work and how these compare with the national levels and examination grades.
- 108 The leadership and management of the subject are good and there is good teamwork amongst all the staff involved. Self-evaluation and lesson observation of teachers by the head of the subject and the line manager are very good. There is a good breadth of curriculum opportunities where students visit art galleries and make contacts with practising artists in this country and other parts of the world such as Paris and New York. Community links are very good and workshops on Saturdays and opportunities for pupils to attend after school provide a very good range of opportunities for pupils to further their work. The use of ICT is good. Improvement since the time of the previous inspection is good as teaching, leadership and management have improved. A wider range of media is used and there is now much more work which is striking and exciting.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils benefit from the outstanding leadership of the head of department and the range and quality of the extra-curricular music activities.
- Pupils' very good learning and achievement are promoted by very good teaching.
- Accommodation for music is unsatisfactory and more computers are needed to support the learning of music technology.

Commentary

- 109 Attainment on entry to the school is average, so the high standards at the end of Year 9 represent very good achievement. By the end of Year 11, GCSE results have been well above national averages for the last few years. Standards seen during the inspection show a continuing improvement and very good achievement overall. Pupils are developing skills as performers and composers, producing interesting compositions that indicate secure knowledge of notations and structure. Pupils have very good critical listening skills and comment sensitively on their colleagues' work, using correct vocabulary. Numbers of pupils taking examination courses in Years 10 and 11 are much higher than at the previous inspection. Pupils improvise well using keyboards and orchestral instruments. In Years 7 to 11, gifted and talented pupils do well as a result of the challenge offered by the teaching and there is no variation in the overall attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, make good progress.
- 110 Teaching is consistently very good, and frequently excellent. Teachers have fine musicianship, very good subject knowledge and a deep understanding of the curriculum that help pupils to learn at a fast pace. Where teaching is excellent, musical demonstrations and explanations are very clear, and the very good summaries at the end of lessons involve pupils and challenge their thinking. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils

encourage pupils to support each other, sharing and participating in music making with a real sense of enjoyment. This is particularly evident in the fine ensembles where a very good mix of individual and collective musical expertise is evident. Pupils' independent learning is developing well as a result of the department's procedures for the assessment and improvement of pupils' work, which are models of good practice. The proportion of pupils learning instruments is four times the national average. Instrumental teaching and learning are very good and pupils make very good progress as a result of the detailed technical advice they receive.

- 111 Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Music is now a strength of the school as a result of the outstanding leadership of the subject and the vision and energy of the music staff. Management is very good and the department operates very efficiently. Pupils benefit from the provision of a rich diet of musical activities and they are grateful for, and strongly support, the learning opportunities available. The cramped and poorly soundproofed rooms, coupled with the shortage of computers, are constraints on pupils' progress, especially in music technology.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the 2004 GCSE examination were very high compared to the national average and pupils achieved very well.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good and all staff share a commitment to raising the status and standards of the department.
- Very good relationships and good lesson management means pupils have a very positive attitude to the subject.

Commentary

- 112 Standards at the end of Year 9 are above the national average. This represents good achievement by pupils who sometimes bring with them from primary schools limited experience and under-developed skills. In games activities, pupils demonstrate good levels of ball-handling skills and spatial awareness, and are developing the skills that will enable them to compete successfully in a wide range of sporting activities.
- 113 Results in GCSE have steadily improved since the previous inspection, and in the 2004 examination the number of pupils gaining the higher A*-C grade passes was very high compared to the national average. A group of Year 11 pupils have also successfully gained the Junior Sports Leaders award. This is a national award for young people who wish to improve their sports organisational skills.
- 114 The good progress in lessons and overall achievement is maintained during Years 10 and 11. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 11 the standards in the non-examination course are above those seen nationally. Good levels of skills are clearly evident in a wide range of activities. For those taking the GCSE course, standards are well above average, with noticeable strengths in the theoretical elements of the course. The standards of practical work are also well above average. Pupils with special educational needs, including those in the hearing impaired unit, are well integrated, given much sensitive and skilful support, and reach good levels of attainment. Many pupils take part in regular inter-school games and competitions and gain much success. Many have represented Hillingdon in a range of sporting activities, and some pupils have gained Middlesex county honours.
- 115 Overall, teaching and learning are very good and a major strength of the department. Important elements of teaching are the very good relationships and management of pupils,

linked to high expectations, which combine to create a co-operative atmosphere of learning in almost all lessons. Teachers are very knowledgeable in all aspects of the subject and teach lessons that offer all pupils the opportunity to make progress and at the same time be sufficiently challenged. Pupils' enjoyment of their lessons is very evident.

- 116 Very good leadership and a positive ethos characterise the management of the department. The department has a clear and shared vision of the standards it wishes to achieve, and knows how it intends to reach them. Relationships amongst the staff are very good, and they make a very effective team. There is a clear desire to improve on the previous best gained by the department. In 2002, the department gained the Sportsmark award and this has been recently re-awarded. This is a national recognition of high-quality provision in physical education. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. There has been significant improvement in examination results and all pupils in Years 10 and 11 now take a certificated course in physical education. The range and number of extra-curricular opportunities have been extended which has resulted in many more pupils being actively involved. The accommodation is much improved and contributes to pupils' achievement.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

The provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and pupils' achievement are good.
- There is very good use of ICT.
- In some Year 11 classes, unsatisfactory behaviour adversely affects pupils' achievement.
- Very good accommodation and resources impact positively on pupils' achievement.
- There is insufficient provision for gifted and talented pupils.

Commentary

- 117 The 2004 GCSE results in business studies were very high compared to the national average and represented excellent achievement by the pupils. In GCSE economics in 2004, results were well below the national average and represented poor achievement in terms of the pupils' prior attainment. The number of entries in business studies was significantly higher than in economics. The standard of work seen in lessons and pupils' folders in both business studies and economics are above average and represent good achievement over time. In both courses, there was no significant difference between the success achieved by boys and girls.
- 118 Teaching and learning are good overall, with some examples of excellent practice. Lessons are well planned and teachers have good secure subject knowledge. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning and achievement. In some Year 11 classes, teachers do not employ effective strategies in dealing with unsatisfactory behaviour and this has an adverse effect on learning and pupils' achievement. Teachers use resources very well, including excellent ICT provision, in raising attainment. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and contain realistic challenges for most pupils. Overall, the subject is inclusive and offers equality of opportunity for pupils. However, the provision of extension work for gifted and talented pupils is not as well structured as that for other pupils. In some lessons, assessment procedures are very thorough and constructive in informing pupils of their standard and how they can improve. However, all teachers do not employ this very good practice. All teachers give positive encouragement and support to their pupils and, as a result, most pupils enjoy the subject and work effectively.
- 119 There is satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. The new head of department has a strong sense of purpose and clear vision for the subject's development. He has a strategy for sharing good practice and creating an effective team of well-qualified and experienced specialist staff. There is an effective performance management system, and all

teachers in the department have good opportunities for their professional development and training.

- 120 There are good curricular opportunities, including a GCSE short course in ICT studied alongside the business studies programme. Very good accommodation and resources have a positive impact on pupils' interest and achievement. Since the previous inspection, there have been important improvements in the overall provision, including ICT resources, numbers choosing business education courses and results in business studies.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

- 121 A programme for personal, social and health education is overseen by an assistant headteacher. It is well taught and follows a framework that ensures that all statutory requirements, such as those for sex education and drugs education, are fully met. Contributions made by subject departments are supplemented by a dedicated weekly lesson taught by form tutors. Heads of year make significant contributions to planning and resourcing, they also monitor the work completed by the tutors of their year teams.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school council and year councils make an outstanding contribution to pupils' understanding of the power of democratic participation.
- The contribution of many subject departments to citizenship education is very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Assessment practice does not yet fully ensure that comparable judgements are being made by different form tutors.

Commentary

- 122 Standards are above expectations in all year groups. Given that the subject was new to the school curriculum just two years ago, this represents good achievement by pupils throughout the school.
- 123 Teaching and learning are good in all years. The subject is taught across many subjects of the curriculum and during a weekly personal, social, health and citizenship lesson that all pupils have with their form tutor. Provision is enriched by citizenship days, and by many aspects of the outstanding extra-curricular provision made by the school. The year councils and school council are active and effective. They exemplify democratic processes within the daily life of the school with an impressive mechanism for informing their discussions by consulting individual tutor groups. There are active sub-committees that report to the school council, and significant aspects of school life have been changed because of the work of the councils. In addition, school committees oversee such things as charitable activities.
- 124 The contributions made by subject departments are of very good quality. Subject departments provide specific lessons, and parts of lessons, that are planned to meet the objectives of the citizenship syllabus. Many of these lessons are very good and during the inspection examples of such were seen within drama, music and physical education. A geography lesson exploring the dilemmas of exploiting the natural resources of Antarctica was an excellent lesson. This enthused and stimulated Year 8 pupils to engage in a sophisticated way with the issues, including that of the meaning of individuals' responsibilities as global citizens. The personal, social and health education lessons are planned and resourced well, and many of them are good, although there is some variation.

- 125 Assessment of pupils' work is developing. Pupils are required to log all lesson contributions to citizenship, and their involvement in activities that give them opportunities for negotiation and decision-making, both within and outside school. The logs are monitored by form tutors who assess and report on pupils' achievement and progress. Whilst their work is monitored by year heads, the systems are not yet robust enough to ensure comparability between assessments made by the different tutors.
- 126 Leadership and management of the subject are very good. An assistant headteacher has organised this subject very well and provided training for all staff. Documentation is of good quality and there is effective monitoring of the work of both the subject departments and the heads of year who, in turn, monitor individual subject teachers and tutors. The year councils and school council have been developed under the guidance of this assistant headteacher, who arranged for external training for the elected councillors.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses							
Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	20	100	78.3	50	21.6	42.5	28.5
Biology	39	85	63.5	20.5	10.4	30.0	19.8
Business studies	24	87.5	75.3	29	15.4	35.5	25.7
Chemistry	29	83	70.3	8	13.2	27.5	23.0
Computing	5	100	n/a	60	n/a	52.0	n/a
Drama	13	100	86.6	23	19.8	40.0	30.9
Design and technology	6	83	72.6	17	13.9	31.5	24.3
Economics	18	89	71.6	55.5	18.6	42.0	25.8
English literature	14	100	86.2	29	17.4	42.0	29.7
French	4	75	79.8	75	19.4	37.5	28.2
Geography	26	100	75.5	46	20.4	42.5	27.0
German	11	64	81.6	18	18.8	23.5	28.8
Government and politics	14	93	n/a	14	n/a	27.5	n/a
History	19	100	82.2	16	20.8	36.5	29.2
Mathematics	28	75	59.9	4	14.1	20.5	20.5
Physical education	14	100	72.2	43	11.8	43.0	22.8
Physics	58	98	66.4	64	14.8	55.5	22.4
Psychology	58	98	64.2	64	11.1	55.5	20.9
Spanish	6	100	77.1	0	17.0	31.5	26.5

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses							
Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	11	100	98.3	36	50.2	72.7	87.1
Biology	19	84	96.6	21	40.0	62.1	79.3
Business studies	25	100	98.9	48	39.4	85.6	81.8
Chemistry	7	100	97.7	57	50.0	97.1	85.7
Computing	7	100	n/a	71	n/a	94.3	n/a
Drama	8	100	99.6	38	42.8	90.0	85.1
Economics	12	92	98.8	25	54.3	71.7	89.8
English literature	10	100	99.4	60	44.9	92.0	85.5
French	5	100	99.0	80	53.1	100	88.9
Geography	16	100	98.8	50	46.4	91.3	85.2
Government and politics	21	100	n/a	33	n/a	82.9	n/a
History	14	100	99.0	29	45.6	80.0	85.1
Mathematics	14	100	96.8	57	56.6	98.6	89.5
Music	2	100	98.2	50	37.1	100.0	79.5
Physical education	11	100	97.8	27	30.9	72.7	75.4
Physics	5	100	96.7	40	45.3	76.0	82.6
Psychology	56	98	96.6	30	36.2	76.4	77.3
Spanish	5	100	98.2	40	53.5	84.0	88.7
Information technology (VCE)	29	97	91.6	17	24.1	69.7	67.9

Level 2 vocational qualifications							
Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
GNVQ Science (Intermediate)	11	100	n/a	64	n/a	9	n/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and convey it well to the students.
- Students develop into effective independent learners through group discussion, research and presentations to the class.
- Students like their English studies and show very positive attitudes to their work.
- There is a high entry criteria to take English in the sixth form and this limits opportunities for many students to continue with their study.

Commentary

- 127 In 2004, the results in English literature were well above the national average which was an improvement on the previous year. Standards of work seen during the inspection reflect recent performance in examinations. The entry level to take English A-level is high and the above average examination results represent good achievement. The students are articulate and work together well in group and paired discussion. Students produce well-structured essays that make close reference to the text to support their arguments. They show a good understanding of the themes and characters in a wide variety of books and display a keen interest in the derivation and meaning of language. Students used independent research skills to produce work of exceptional quality on 'A Passage to India'. Students taking English have a high regard for the course, but many other students are denied access because of the high entry level.
- 128 Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge and skilful questioning to good effect. Teachers extend the students' thinking and draw out more complex thoughts during lessons. Relationships are positive and students have very good attitudes to the work. Students are encouraged to develop their own responses to texts and present their ideas to the class which provides good challenge and promotes independent learning.
- 129 Leadership and management are good. Students are supplied with comprehensive notes and guidance which help them to have a thorough understanding of the texts studied. Texts are chosen thoughtfully to match students' interest where possible. The department has the capacity to maintain the standards and gain further improvements.

German

Provision in German is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Year 13 show a high standard of speaking skills.
- Students' learning is enhanced by the expert subject knowledge of the teachers.
- Leadership is providing clear vision and direction.
- The use of ICT to support pupils' learning is not well developed.

Commentary

- 130 There were no candidates for A-level German in 2004, and only very small numbers in previous years, making judgement about previous standards unreliable. Recruitment of students to the course has since improved. The five students in the current Year 13 are on course to attain the higher grades. Standards are above average, and achievement is good in the light of the progress made since GCSE. The level of sophistication and fluency of conversations in lessons is very high. Students communicate with confidence and

determination, and without inhibitions about making mistakes. They are also competent in finding alternative ways of communicating ideas, which are initially difficult to express. Their writing is not yet quite of the same standard, mainly owing to gaps in information and detail, coupled with some inaccuracies in grammar. The progress of the ten Year 12 students is reflected in the wide range of ability in the group. Higher attaining students are coping well, having overcome earlier uncertainties in sentence construction. The standard of accuracy of the average attaining students is constantly improving, whereas the lower attaining students show less range of vocabulary and construction and are still tending to make elementary grammatical mistakes. Overall students achieve well.

- 131 Teaching and learning are good. The teachers are expert German speakers. Discussion is entirely in German and is consistent and intense. The teachers involve each student, challenging them to expand on their initial ideas, and explain and justify their opinions. Students are constantly aware of the demands of the examination, and of the techniques required to ensure gaining the highest possible marks. There is good support in practising grammar in detail, in order to become more aware of language patterns and increase accuracy. Assessment is good, particularly in advice on how to improve performance.
- 132 Leadership and management are good. There are firm policies and teaching strategies in place, and teachers support students' learning well with authentic materials from newspapers, magazines and the Internet, to supplement the quickly outdated materials in the course books. There is also an opportunity for students to gain work experience in Berlin. Students are encouraged to use ICT independently to support their learning, but there is insufficient formal use of computers in the course. Since the previous inspection, the high standards of the sixth form have been maintained.

MATHEMATICS

Although the focus was on A-level mathematics, one lesson of further mathematics was sampled. This was an excellent lesson and showed that students in the subject are achieving very well.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good relationships between teachers and students promote positive attitudes to the work.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this stimulates students' learning.
- ICT is used effectively and imaginatively to enhance learning.
- Good leadership and management ensure staff work well as a team.

Commentary

- 133 Both the AS level and A-level examinations in 2004 showed that students are reaching levels that are well above the national average. These results indicate a slight increase over the 2003 results and show that boys are performing slightly better than girls. The results, compared with the GCSE grade gained by students, indicate that achievement is good.
- 134 In the work seen, standards were above average for A-level courses and show that students make good progress in lessons. They are capable of choosing from a wide range of mathematical methods, and students in the A-level classes show that they can remember work from the previous year when solving problems of a more difficult nature. Students are very positive in lessons. There is a genuine sense of friendship between students and their teachers, and students know that they can always ask when they are in difficulty. They support one another well and are becoming confident in taking responsibility for their own learning.
- 135 Teaching and learning are very good overall, and sometimes excellent. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject. Lessons are well-planned with a variety of activities and

good pace. Teachers encourage students to learn by asking probing, open-ended questions that give them a greater depth of understanding of the topic being studied. Teachers and students use ICT as a natural part of a mathematics lesson. The imaginative use of Interactive whiteboards by the teacher, combined with students' individual use of laptops, widens the scope of the lessons and increases the speed at which students learn. Homework is set as a logical extension to the learning in lessons. Work is marked well with helpful and constructive comments.

- 136 Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed head of department is a good role model for the rest of the team, and teachers work effectively together to teach the courses. Schemes of work are constantly being reviewed to ensure more effective teaching of the curriculum. Assessment is used well by teachers to inform students of their progress by means of constructive comments on marked work and the use of model answers to provide students with good revision material. The department is well provided with ICT equipment in the form of electronic whiteboards and data projectors, and a set of laptops in a mobile cabinet. The improvement since the previous inspection is good.

SCIENCE

Biology

Provision in biology is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2004, standards in A-level biology were below average and achievement was unsatisfactory.
- There has been a lack of rigour in using assessment data to raise standards.
- Day-to-day marking is insufficient and does not help students to improve their work.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use well to interest students in biology.

Commentary

- 137 Standards in biology A-level examinations are below average. Students do significantly less well in biology than in other subjects and less well than expected. In 2004, few students achieved higher grades, particularly boys. Girls performed better than boys with all girls achieving a pass grade. Results in AS level examinations were above average, although no student achieved the higher grades. A significant number who under-performed will repeat their examinations. Standards of work seen during the inspection are broadly average.
- 138 Achievement is unsatisfactory. In 2004, able students achieved as expected. However, within the average and less able group, three boys failed to achieve a pass grade and a proportion of other students' achievement was lower than it should have been. This was because there were weaknesses in assessment and a lack of close monitoring of students' progress. Some students currently in Year 12 and Year 13 are achieving as expected, but others are not. Teachers are now aware of the under-achievement because they monitor students' work more closely through more regular tests and follow-up work. However, day-to-day marking and assessment are still insufficient to diagnose weaknesses and explain to students how to improve their work further. This is particularly important because biology is a popular course and attracts a wide range of students. These include those with lower GCSE grades than usual, the less motivated and those who do not have a scientific background who all require different kinds of support and guidance. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve as well as other students.
- 139 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. All teachers have good knowledge of biology, which they use to explain ideas and provide a good range of interesting activities including practical and ICT. As a result, learning within individual lessons is good and students reported that they enjoy biology. Teachers ask probing questions that check students' progress, they respond to individual needs and misunderstandings and provide good support. Students

reported that teachers provide extra support to students who ask for help. Homework complements work in class, which most students complete but other less motivated students do not. These students fall behind in their work and because there is not enough day-to-day assessment, this is not always picked up in time and dealt with effectively.

- 140 Assessment has improved and is satisfactory. Tests are now set and marked more frequently and work is gone over in lessons. Students' coursework is marked, but notes and other work are not checked regularly. Consequently, students' work varies from that of a consistently high quality to work that is incomplete and of a lower quality. Teachers do not tell students in enough detail what they must do to improve their work further. The department has recently started to review students' progress more frequently and to analyse whether students are on course to meet their targets. At present, they do not use the results of assessment to refine teaching programmes to meet the needs of all students. Nor is the scheme of work sufficiently detailed to help teachers to plan for students of different abilities. The technician works effectively to provide very good support to teachers.
- 141 Leadership is now satisfactory. The head of biology has taken action to improve current students' achievement. He has laid out priorities and actions but does not explain how these will lead to improvement in results. Whilst the changes are relatively recent, some were seen during the inspection. Overall management is unsatisfactory. The head of biology has not monitored students' progress and analysed test and examination results. He has not found out the causes of under-achievement. As a result, until recently there has been insufficient action taken to improve results. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because standards have declined.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective teaching has resulted in well above average standards and very good achievement.
- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject gives students considerable confidence in lessons.
- Challenge and expectation are very high and students are highly motivated.

Commentary

- 142 Standards of work are well above average. Students enter the course with average attainment. Examination results in A-level chemistry in 2004 were well above average representing very good achievement by the students. Progress in lessons is also very good. Boys and girls make similar progress, as do students from ethnic minority backgrounds. The trend in standards over the past three years has been upward. This achievement is largely due to very good teaching.
- 143 Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable about the chemistry they teach. Their knowledge is used well in lessons to enthuse their students to acquire very good skills and understanding. Students have very good practical skills, they work safely and with a great sense of purpose. Students' work is marked rigorously which enables them to improve their grades. Students are encouraged to become responsible as independent learners through well-planned exercises.
- 144 Leadership and management are very good. The head of subject is a highly effective leader. She has good vision for improving the department and has already achieved and sustained high standards. There are very good teaching resources. Students make very good progress in lessons because there is very effective management. Their performance is monitored

carefully so that teachers can give targeted assistance to those students who may be underachieving. Teachers work as a very effective team and they are supported very well.

- 145 Accommodation and resources are good. The lack of interactive whiteboards seriously hampers teachers' ability to use ICT teaching resources. Other resources are good and are sufficient to provide good facilities for students' investigative work. The technicians are highly competent and their work is much appreciated by teachers. The department has made good improvement since the previous inspection as standards have continued to rise.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

During the inspection, ICT in Year 12 and computing in Year 13 were sampled. Standards in both subjects are above the national average and achievement over time is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and psychology.

Geography

The provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and reach above average standards.
- Teachers are committed, enthusiastic and have very good subject knowledge.
- Assessment and support procedures for students are very good.
- There is very effective leadership and management of a highly committed team of teachers.

Commentary

- 146 As at GCSE, A/AS level geography is a popular subject and the results have improved over recent years. Last year, all students passed A-level, with half gaining A/B grades. In recent years, girls generally gained higher grades than boys. Standards are above average and students have a good geographical knowledge. They also develop good research methods to carry out original geographical study based on fieldwork. They successfully interpret and analyse data, use computers effectively, but in some studies where they understand, for example, the physical processes at work on the landscape, students lack knowledge of the actual places where such processes are occurring.
- 147 The achievement of students who study geography in Years 12 and 13 is good. Students gain grades above those expected based on their attainment at GCSE. This is because of good teaching, with lessons that are well planned and provide students with a wide variety of activities and up-to-date resources. Students have very good attitudes to learning. They are attentive and work easily and well, both independently and collaboratively. They feel very well supported by their teachers.
- 148 Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers plan their lessons well and ensure that there is a good range and quality of activities and resources to support students' learning. Relationships throughout are very good. Teachers are keen geographers and work hard to ensure that pupils enjoy the subject. Students make good use of ICT. However, there is insufficient use of maps to build up students' knowledge and location of actual places. Teachers are good at drawing students into a topic and through challenging questioning and tasks promote students' critical thinking. Assessment procedures are good. Students' work is marked frequently, feedback is always given and students know what they need to do to improve or remain on task.

- 149 Leadership and management are very good. The head of department knows the strengths and areas for development in his department very well. A high quality development plan reflects priorities to improve the quality of geography for students. Teachers are conscientious and effectively support students' learning. Teachers are an effective team, and amongst many things, they discuss frequently students' progress so that strategies for improvement can be put in place for any student if required. The curriculum is very good and enhanced by a residential field study week in Devon. The department is well resourced. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the department are excellent.
- Standards in Years 12 and 13 are well above the national average and students achieve well.
- Students display excellent attitudes to their learning.
- The quality of teaching is very good and sometimes excellent.
- Students are very appreciative of the support they receive.
- There are few opportunities for students to attend conferences or listen to visiting speakers.

Commentary

- 150 Examination results at both AS and A-level in recent years have been at or above the national average. In the most recent A-level examination, for example, all but one of the 56 students entered achieved a pass and nearly one-third achieved the highest grades. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average in both years. In Year 12, students soon develop a very good understanding of the key approaches and major theories in psychology and, in this context, some very detailed note-taking was seen on the psychology of individual differences. In Year 13, retention rates are high and students begin to analyse theories to considerable depth. They also develop independent learning skills very well and have produced very well-researched essays on environmental stress. In both years, all students achieve well in terms of their prior attainment at GCSE.
- 151 The high standards and achievement outlined above are testament to the quality of teaching and learning, which are very good overall and sometimes excellent. Expectations are high and teachers use very good subject knowledge to engage students in their learning. Lessons are conducted at a very lively pace and all students are expected to learn through very skilled use of questioning. Above all, there is a sense of enjoyment and pleasure in the pursuit of knowledge. As a result, students display very mature attitudes and an excellent commitment to learning.
- 152 Leadership and management in the subject are excellent. There are very clear plans for future development and very good assessment techniques give students a clear understanding of their progress. Resources are very good and, in particular, students are provided with an array of very useful handouts and booklets to supplement their learning. ICT and the Internet are used constructively, but students would benefit from opportunities to attend conferences and listen to visiting speakers. Overall, this is a highly popular and very successful area of sixth-form provision. It is a considerable strength to the school and students are very appreciative of the support they receive. The department has the undoubted capacity to build on its current success.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No subjects were inspected in this curriculum area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Work was sampled in Year 12 AS level and Year 13 A-level art and design. At the end of Years 12 and Year 13 students attain above average standards. In maintaining these above average standards previously attained at GCSE, they achieve satisfactorily. The quality of teaching and learning is good and students show very good attitudes to their work. There is a good breadth and balance of curricular opportunities, and the leadership and management of the subject are good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and standards are in line with those attained nationally.
- Very good teaching with high expectations promotes very good learning.
- Students respond very positively to teaching and are highly motivated learners.

Commentary

- 153 The 2004 A-level results were in line with the national average, both for the proportion of students obtaining a pass grade and for the proportion of students obtaining the higher A/B grades. Generally, these results were above the predictions based on students' GCSE grades and students achieved well. A-level results have consistently been in line with the national averages since the previous inspection. In the AS level examinations in 2004, all students obtained pass grades, with one third obtaining the higher grades. There were no significant differences in the standards attained by male and female students.
- 154 Inspection evidence shows that students presently in Years 12 and 13 are achieving well and producing work that is at least in line with that seen nationally, with some very able students producing work of a higher standard. Work folders are very well organized and demonstrate that the demands of the A-level syllabi are being met. Students write at length on a variety of topics, such as drug abuse in sport, the effect of the media on sport and the effect of sponsorship. Students ask perceptive questions of their teacher using appropriate technical language. Most are articulate and convey their views very effectively. They display a range of discussion skills as they argue and defend their viewpoints. Views are often vigorously expressed, challenged and defended, although students are very tolerant of each other's views.
- 155 The quality of the teaching on the A-level courses is very good and sometimes excellent. Lessons are very well planned, with clear objectives that are shared with students. Teachers know their subject very well, demonstrating a high level of scholarship and a keen awareness of their students' learning needs. Assignment work is demanding. Teachers know their students well, and are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and are skilled at asking just the right questions in order to prompt thought and enter discussions. Students respond very positively to the high quality teaching.
- 156 The subject is very well led and managed. Teachers involved in the A-level course work well together, sharing views on successful ways of teaching, and show a very strong commitment to their students. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

BUSINESS

Business education

Provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and students' achievement are good.
- There are very good curricular opportunities, including business links.
- Very good accommodation and resources have a positive impact on students' achievement.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Assessment and monitoring procedures are insufficiently developed.

Commentary

- 157 Attainment in A-level courses in business studies was well above national averages in 2003 and above national averages in 2004. These standards represent good achievement based on the students' prior attainment at GCSE. Attainment in A-level economics in 2003 was in line with the national average and in 2004 below the national average, representing unsatisfactory achievement. AS level results in 2004 in economics were impressive, being well above average. Standards in lessons observed and in students' folders were above national expectations, reflecting good achievement over time. Boys and girls achieve equally well.
- 158 The good achievement results from good teaching and students' motivation. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. As a result, lessons are normally conducted at a good pace and result in positive learning and progress. Students also benefit from access to very good resources, including ICT, which are used effectively in lessons and when completing homework assignments. These assignments are marked satisfactorily, but overall assessment procedures, including the monitoring of progress are insufficiently developed. Assessment does not always respond clearly to individual needs and inform students how they can improve. There are very good curricular opportunities, including business links in the community. Students, therefore, have a good understanding of the business world and benefit from a very good range of trips and extra-curricular opportunities.
- 159 There is satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. A new head of department has been appointed and has established clear priorities for the development of the subject. Effective performance management procedures are well established, and there are good opportunities for further training and professional development. The head of department has a clear strategy for creating an effective team of the well-qualified and experienced specialist staff.
- 160 Accommodation and resources are very good, ensuring an effective working environment, and impact positively on students' motivation and achievement. Since the previous inspection good improvements have taken place with regard to the quality of resources, particularly in terms of ICT, within the business education rooms, extra-curricular opportunities and the numbers choosing business education courses in the sixth form. There has also been an increase in the number of students going on to related courses in higher education.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No subjects were inspected in this curriculum area.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No subjects were inspected in this curriculum area.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3
<i>Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).</i>		