

# INSPECTION REPORT

**TOMLINCOTE SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM  
COLLEGE**

Frimley, Camberley

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125261

Principal: Mr A Ryles

Lead inspector: Dr J Mills

Dates of inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> February 2005

Inspection number: 273291

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 students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1,503
School address:	Tomlinscote Way Frimley Camberley Surrey
Postcode:	GU16 8PY
Telephone number:	(01276) 709 050
Fax number:	(01276) 709 060
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Colonel K Steel
Date of previous inspection:	11 <sup>th</sup> October 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Tomlinscote School and Sixth Form College, in Frimley, is a mixed, oversubscribed comprehensive school with 1,503 students on roll, including 196 in the sixth form. It has specialist status as a language college, and gained a School Achievement Award in 2001. Ninety-three per cent of the students are white British. None of the students are at an early stage of learning to speak English, and the proportion entitled to free school meals (one per cent) is well below average. The attainment of students on entry to the school is well above average. The school includes a Literacy Cluster for 12 students with specific learning needs. This is organised as an integral part of the school's special educational needs (SEN) provision. Cluster students have access to the full curriculum, the school has access to the expertise of Cluster staff, and support is shared widely between students with similar needs. Over the whole school, the proportion of students with a statement of special education need (one per cent) is below average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
32072	Dr Janet Mills	Lead inspector	
9163	Mr Geoff Humphrey	Lay inspector	
23418	Mr Roger Yates	Team inspector	Art and design
32150	Mr Kerrigan Redman	Team inspector	Business education
8076	Mr Terry Bendall	Team inspector	Design and technology
34521	Mrs Ruth Westbrook	Team inspector	Drama
32783	Mr Michael Webb	Team inspector	English
19530	Ms Jennifer Bray	Team inspector	Geography
14841	Mr Michael Duffey	Team inspector	History
18734	Mr Chris Salt	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
32993	Mrs Gwendoline Newton	Team inspector	Mathematics
1995	Dr Kate Seager	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
11626	Mr Malcolm Goldring	Team inspector	Music
30198	Mr Reg Chick	Team inspector	Physical education
10392	Mrs Donaleen Ratcliff	Team inspector	Religious education; citizenship
16786	Dr Selwyn Hodge	Team inspector	Science; post-16 chemistry
18665	Ms Susan Murray	Team inspector	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal Education  
1 - 4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Tomlinscote School and Sixth Form College is a **good** school. The teaching is good, students' attitudes to learning are very positive, and students achieve well. Examination and test results are high, and students build upon their well above average achievement on entry to the school, particularly in science. The quality of education and value for money that the school provides are good, as are the leadership and management provided by key staff.

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

- a high proportion of teaching is very good or excellent;
- high standards are achieved by many students in subjects including art and design, geography, history, physical education and science;
- the students have very positive attitudes to learning, and their behaviour is good;
- the staff show great dedication and commitment;
- the principal and key staff provide effective leadership, and the governing body provide good challenge and support;
- students have incomplete access to required subjects including religious education, citizenship, information and communication technology (ICT) and music;
- there are weaknesses in the deployment of staff, and these have an adverse impact on students' attainment;
- rates of attendance are low in Year 11 and Year 12; and
- the school has an unduly cautious approach to developing its curriculum.

**The school has made satisfactory progress overall since its last inspection.** It has largely maintained its high standards, despite substantial reductions in its budget in 2003, and in the size of its sixth form. However, the school has made unsatisfactory progress with addressing the key issues that were raised by inspectors. While it has addressed the need to provide further opportunities for students' spiritual development, its curricular provision for ICT remains unsatisfactory, although it has improved recently. The school has not introduced collective worship, or a programme of religious education in the sixth form, and the programme of religious education that it provides in Years 10 and 11 no longer meets requirements. The school carries out its specialist role and meets its specific objectives satisfactorily.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			Schools with similar attainment in Year 9
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	C
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	C	C	C	

*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 similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Students' achievement is **good**. They enter the school with levels of attainment that are well above average; by Year 9 they have made average progress in subjects including English and mathematics,

and above average progress in subjects including science; by Year 11 they have made above average progress since leaving primary school; satisfactory progress continues during the sixth form. Boys achieve less well than girls. Students with SEN achieve well.

The provision for students' personal development is **good**, and the students' attitudes to learning are a strength of the school. Rates of attendance have improved recently, although they were too low during the inspection in Year 11 and Year 12. The opportunities provided for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. The teaching is **good** overall, with a high proportion of teaching that is very good or excellent, and this leads to **good** learning from age 11 to 18. The teaching of students of above average and below average ability is equally effective. Curriculum provision within the timetable is sound overall, and enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular provision. Assessment procedures are good overall, but there is insufficient marking of students' work in some subjects. The deployment of staff hinders the learning in some subjects: the teaching of some classes is shared between two teachers, and some Year 7 classes do not have a teacher assigned for music. The quality and quantity of the resources for learning meet the needs of the curriculum well in most subjects, but the accommodation hinders learning in drama, and particularly music. Students are cared for effectively, and receive a good quality of support, advice and guidance, and the school seeks, and frequently acts upon, students' views. Many parents respond well to the school's efforts to forge links. The school's links with the community are very good.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are both good. The leadership of the principal, and of other key staff, is effective overall, but the links between subject leaders and their managers vary in effectiveness, and this leads to some unevenness in the ability of the school to evaluate itself, and act accordingly. The governing body challenges and supports senior managers effectively, but does not meet all its statutory duties. The financial affairs of the school are handled very efficiently.

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

The parents who completed questionnaires, or who attended the pre-inspection meeting, are generally very supportive of this oversubscribed school. Many of them would welcome further feedback about their children's academic progress. Almost all the students feel that Tomlinscote is a good school to attend, and that they are taught well, expected to work hard, and trusted. However, some feel that staff do not treat all students fairly, and worry about bullying, and other students' behaviour, at times.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

#### **In order to improve further, the school should:**

- increase its good practice in the use of assessment, including marking;
- develop its curriculum, so that the needs of students are met more effectively;
- place students centre stage when determining its timetable, and deciding how to deploy teaching staff;
- ensure that subject leaders are challenged and supported more consistently by senior managers;

and ensure that it meets statutory requirements in respect of ICT including reporting to parents, religious education, citizenship, music, risk assessment, checks of visiting teachers, and provision of a daily act of collective worship.



## THE SIXTH FORM AT TOMLINCOTE SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

There are 196 students in the sixth form: 100 in Year 12 and 96 in Year 13. Most of the students follow GCE courses, but some vocational options are offered.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good**, cost-effective sixth form. Good teaching combined with students' very positive attitudes and good assessment procedures lead to good achievement. The sixth form is managed and led effectively.

#### The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- there is good, very good or excellent provision in nine of the subjects that were the focus of the inspection: English, German, mathematics, chemistry, geography, art and design, photography, football coaching and business studies;
- teachers are experts in their subjects;
- students have opportunities for individual attention provided with relatively small teaching groups;
- there is a wide range of GCE A and AS courses available; and
- the curriculum provides less effectively for students who are not suited to, or do not wish to take, academic courses.

### 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	Provision in English is <b>good</b> . The teaching is of high quality, and students achieve well. Provision in German is <b>good</b> . Recent A/AS examination results have been very good. Current standards are broadly average; they vary from high to below average. Teaching is very good.
Mathematics	Provision is <b>good</b> . In both A-level mathematics and further mathematics, teachers are very knowledgeable and effective. Students' attitude to learning is very good and they make very good progress. Provision of courses other than A-level is limited.
Science	Provision in chemistry is <b>good</b> . Learning is effective as a result of the very knowledgeable and well-planned teaching. Students work very hard and achieve well.
Information and communication technology	Provision in ICT is <b>satisfactory</b> . Teaching and learning are very good, and standards are improving. Students receive good support and encouragement and they have positive attitudes. Their achievement is satisfactory.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in design and technology (product design) is <b>satisfactory</b> . The teachers are very experienced, the attitudes of students are very positive, and students make good progress.
Humanities	Provision in geography is <b>very good</b> . Standards overall are well above the national average. Challenging teaching results in good achievement and very good coursework.

Visual and performing arts and media	Provision for art and design is <b>very good</b> . Standards are above average because of the good quality lesson and course planning, good teaching and the excellent attitude of the students. Activities are challenging and students work well as independent learners.  Provision for photography is <b>very good</b> . Because of expert and enthusiastic teaching, standards are above average and students make rapid progress. Technical skills and processes are taught very well at a professional level, with some students producing work that is outstanding.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision for the NVQ Football Coaching Award is <b>excellent</b> . A well structured and delivered programme of football coaching produces very high levels of achievement and opens doors to employment opportunities within football and sport in general.
Business education	Provision is <b>good</b> in business studies. Standards exceed course expectations. Students achieve well as a result of very good teaching and learning, and their attitudes are very positive.

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*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 judgements 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.*

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

The advice and guidance afforded to students in the sixth form are **very good**. There is a very favourable ratio of tutors to students on most of the available courses. The sixth form student council has a significant influence on the life and work of the school. The support provided for students and their families when considering their options for higher education is very good. Students receive very good guidance on their further study or career opportunities.

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

The leadership and management are both **good**. While some of the teaching groups in the sixth form are small, the school has shown that the sixth form is cost-effective. The acting head of sixth form is well supported by senior managers and an effective team of tutors in the day-to-day management of the sixth form. There has been a focus on improving the attendance and punctuality of students this year. A-level teachers have a good record of students' progress on their courses. Governors, the principal and staff have worked hard to combat the difficult issues surrounding recruitment to the sixth form.

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

Students are generally positive about the sixth form. They feel that they are taught effectively, they receive good advice about careers, and the school is well run. While many students feel that the school does not seek and respond to their views, inspectors judged that the functioning of the sixth form council met these needs effectively.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students' achievement is good throughout the school. Their results in national tests and examinations compare well with those in similar schools, and the students who completed Year 11 in 2004 had made above average progress since leaving primary school. Girls generally achieve more highly than boys, but this is not so in all subjects. Students with SEN achieve well. The small proportion of minority ethnic students achieve well.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement in Years 7-9 is good in English, science, modern foreign languages, geography, history, art and design, drama, music and physical education.
- Students' achievement in Years 10-11 is good in English, science, history, drama, music, physical education and business studies, and very good in geography, and art and design.
- The students who continue into the sixth form achieve well in subjects including English, German, chemistry, geography, and design and technology (product design), and very well in subjects including art and design, photography and football coaching.
- Students with special educational needs made good progress both in the Cluster, and in the main school.
- Weaknesses in provision limit students' achievement in ICT, citizenship and religious studies in the main school.
- Boys achieve less well than girls.

#### Commentary

1. Students enter Tomlinscote School and Sixth Form College with attainment that is well above average.
2. The students who completed Year 9 in 2004 achieved test results in English, mathematics and science that were a little higher than those achieved in 2003. The school's results for Year 9 have not yet been validated, because of national difficulties with the collection of data in 2004. However, the school's results place it in the upper quartile for all schools nationally in English, mathematics and science. It equalled its target in English, and exceeded it in mathematics and science, but missed it in ICT. Students had made average progress in English and mathematics, and well above average progress in science, during their first three years at the school. More than half of the students achieve Level 6 or above in the teacher assessments carried out in geography and history.

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

Standards in:	School results - unvalidated in 2004	National results
English	36.7 (36.3)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	39.9 (39.5)	n/a (35.4)
science	38.8 (37.4)	n/a (33.6)

*There were 253 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. Work seen during the inspection generally confirmed that the standards achieved in Year 9 in 2004 are being maintained during 2005. Students' achievement is satisfactory in mathematics,

ICT, and design and technology, and good in English, modern foreign languages, physical education, science, religious education, geography, history, art and design, drama and music. Students' low achievement in citizenship is a reflection of unsatisfactory provision within the curriculum. Students have the skills in language and literacy, and mathematics, that they need to make progress in all areas of the curriculum. Computers are used rarely across the curriculum at Tomlinscote, but students draw on the capability that they have developed through using computers at home and during ICT lessons, when appropriate.

4. While the proportion of Year 11 students who gained five or more GCSEs at Grade C or above fell to 68 per cent in 2004, the school's lowest result for several years, each of the four results shown in the table below still placed the school well above the national average. Value-added analysis showed that overall the Year 11 students had made above average progress since completing Year 9, and above average progress since leaving primary school. However, this was partly because the achievement of the school's relatively low attainers had largely been sustained. The percentage of students who gained five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE was below the median for schools where students had achieved similar standards at the end of Year 9. The school had missed its target of 72 per cent for students gaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE, but exceeded its target of 99 per cent gaining one or more A\*-G grades at GCSE. Girls achieved higher than boys. The girls' average point score was well above the national median for girls; the boys' was above the national median for boys.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	68 (75)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	41.4 (41.9)	34.9 (34.7)

*There were 241 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

5. Work seen during lessons and in samples of students' work confirms that Year 10 and Year 11 students' achievement is satisfactory in mathematics, modern foreign languages, ICT, and design and technology; good in English, science, history, drama, music, physical education and business studies; and very good in geography, and art and design. Students' achievement in religious education and citizenship is limited by weaknesses in provision. However, students studying GCSE religious studies achieve well.
6. While the school's results for high attainers in Year 11 fell in 2005, they remained stable for lower attainers, and rose in Year 9. It is possible that the school's results have reached a plateau, but there is no evidence that a trend of diminishing results has been established.
7. Throughout the school, girls tend to achieve more highly than boys. The difference in their achievement at GCSE in Year 11 diminished in 2003, but widened again in 2004. There are more boys in the school, particularly in the current Year 11 where there are very few girls in some classes, and they can appear to be socially isolated. The school has a policy of alternate boy-girl seating, and this means that differences in the speaking and listening skills of boys and girls are rarely evident in classrooms during work in pairs and small groups. The differences in the achievement of boys and girls become more evident in their written work. Where students are permitted to work in single-gender groups, for example, in a Year 7 drama lesson, the groups of boys worked as effectively as the groups of girls.

8. Students with SEN achieve well. At the last inspection, there were a declining number of students with SEN in the main school, and Cluster students had a specific learning difficulty but were otherwise of at least average ability. Over the last three years, the Cluster has admitted students with a wider range of more complex needs, and lower prior attainment, and the proportion of other students with special educational needs has also increased. They almost all make good progress. They make steady progress during Years 7-9, with a view to taking a full complement of GCSEs in Year 11. Their progress is carefully monitored on a termly basis through well-focused individual education plans, as well as through routine school evaluation. Some students excel.

### *Example of outstanding practice*

**Work in English folders shows some Cluster students making rapid progress of more than two National Curriculum levels during Years 7–9.** Since 1999, two fifths of Year 11 Cluster students have gained at least three A\*-C GCSEs, with one student gaining seven 'B' grades.

9. The small proportion of minority ethnic students achieve well.

### **Sixth form**

The school's results improved slightly in 2004. While it considers that it lost some of its most able sixth formers to a nearby designated sixth form college, its results continue to be in line with the national average.

#### *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	90.0 (89.6)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	35.5 (32.3)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per student	258.6 (242.7)	265.2 (258.2)

*There were 104 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Students' attitudes towards their learning, and interest and engagement in their work, are very good. Behaviour throughout the school is good and it is very good in the sixth form college. The attendance and punctuality of students are satisfactory. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students have very good attitudes towards their work.
- There are good standards of behaviour and mutual respect between students and their teachers.
- Students show great willingness to make a positive contribution to the life and work of the school and college.
- Students have well-developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural values.
- Students with SEN work hard and make good use of the facilities offered in the SEN Base.

### **Commentary**

10. The very good attitude that students have towards their learning is because they enjoy lessons, find the work interesting and challenging and have high levels of commitment. In their responses to the pre-inspection survey, parents confirmed this to be the case. In lessons students demonstrate a good work ethic. As they mature, they develop a lively and enquiring approach towards their learning which increases their engagement and adds to the quality of the teaching and learning atmosphere in the classroom. They co-operate well and support each other and conversely develop the ability to work independently with sustained concentration and determination to complete the tasks they have been given. The positive attitudes reported after the last inspection have been well maintained.
11. Behaviour is good. Students understand the rules and consider them to be just and fair. They demonstrate care and consideration towards each other, particularly older students towards the younger ones. There is a high level of mutual respect and trust between the students and staff. The pastoral teams respond effectively to reported incidents of bullying or harassment and any other forms of unsatisfactory behaviour. There are effective strategies for engaging students who find it difficult to meet the high expectations of behaviour and commitment towards their learning. In the last twelve months there were 92 temporary exclusions involving 44 boys and 19 girls. In addition, one male student was permanently excluded.

***Ethnic background of students***

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No. of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1,402	88	1
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	26	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	4	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	23	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	7	0	0
Black or Black British – African	6	0	0
Chinese	14	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0

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

12. Attendance is satisfactory. The school has generally maintained a level of attendance well above the national average but in the academic year 2003 to 2004, attendances fell below this level. In the current year, the overall levels of attendance are again satisfactory for the school but in Years 10 and 11 it is still well below that being recorded in Years 7, 8 and 9. During the inspection, the rates of attendance at the lessons that were observed were 87 per cent, 75 per cent and 88 per cent in Years 11, 12 and 13 respectively, but over 90 per cent in all other years. The school is working hard to regain the former high levels of attendance for all year groups and is about to introduce electronic registration procedures that will record and compare individual students' attendance for every lesson. Punctuality to lessons is good.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.2	School data	0.6
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

13. Students are provided with good opportunities to use their initiative and contribute to the work and life of the school. There is an elected student council for each year group, with selected representatives from each council forming a whole-school council jointly led by the two student presidents. A selected number of Year 10 students undertake special training to become mentors for each new intake of Year 7 students. Under a similar scheme, Year 11 students become prefects to support the students in Year 8. The physical education department also selects students to become sports leaders to assist with the organisation and supervision of extra-curricular activities in the sports and leisure centre.
14. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. The spiritual dimension to the curriculum is very well planned and the schemes of work across the curriculum have been audited and much improved since the previous inspection. There are good opportunities for students to explore their own values, feelings and emotions through discussion, literature, drama, religious education, history, geography, art and design, and music. Students are encouraged to act in accordance with their own principles and to challenge injustice and discrimination. Personal values are strongly promoted through assemblies and the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme. The school provides a very clear moral code, with appropriate emphasis on the principles of equality and inclusion.
15. Students have good knowledge and understanding of British cultural heritage and traditions. The historic cultural backgrounds and traditions of the relatively small number of students from ethnic minority backgrounds are acknowledged and celebrated through the curriculum, assemblies, and the school's extensive overseas connections. Students regularly have opportunities to travel to countries throughout Europe and as far afield as Japan. Their awareness and understanding of other cultures and the multicultural nature of many communities in Britain are well developed.
16. Students with SEN work hard and make good use of the additional teaching and the support they receive in lessons. They attend withdrawal lessons promptly and participate fully. Students working on an individual spelling programme with sixth formers make their way independently to sessions. They remember to attend homework clubs and extra lunchtime sessions. Students treat each other with respect and discuss each other's ideas seriously. Those with communication difficulties and Asperger's Syndrome learn to relate to others appropriately and cope with being in crowded situations. All students develop the confidence to read their work to each other, to explain their ideas clearly, and to accept critical comment.

### *Example of outstanding practice*

**A dozen trained sixth formers work with students with SEN on a structured reading scheme – the 'Toe by Toe' programme.** This works well: the sixth formers are committed, the learners are well motivated, relationships are good, and the work is purposeful.

### **Sixth form**

17. The attitudes and values of students in the sixth form are very good and they provide very good role models for the rest of the school. They express very positive views about the school and are very supportive of its work and ethos. The sixth form student council sets a very good example through raising money for charity and influencing the life and work of the school and college. All sixth form students work on selected projects in the community. Their punctuality is satisfactory. There are no students in the sixth form who would normally be considered to have SEN.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. The teaching and learning, and the assessment system are good, and the curriculum is sound. The school cares well for its students, and its partnership with the community is very good.

### Teaching and learning

Across the school, and particularly from Year 8 to Year 13, the quality of the teaching and learning is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers have good knowledge of their subjects.
- One third of the lessons are very good or excellent.
- There is some very good teaching, and very good learning, in almost all subjects.
- All the lessons in the sixth form are satisfactory or better.
- Very good teaching enables students with SEN to develop the confidence to succeed in ordinary lessons as well as in small groups. They gain ‘learning to learn’ strategies and develop thinking skills.
- There is less very good teaching in Year 7.
- Seven per cent of the lessons in the main school are unsatisfactory.
- There are too many unsatisfactory lessons in mathematics and modern foreign languages.
- Interactive whiteboards, where available, are rarely used effectively.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 232 lessons in main school and 6<sup>th</sup> form*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
16 (7%)	62 (27%)	91 (39%)	50 (22%)	12 (5%)	1 (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.*

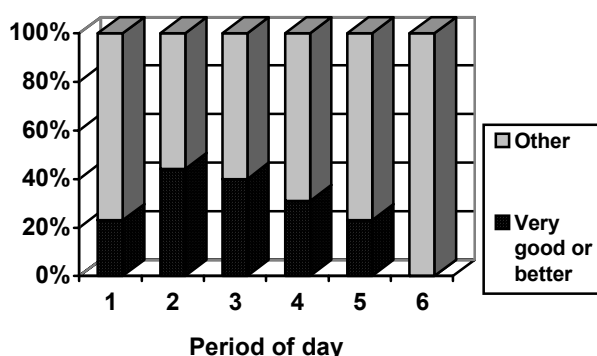
18. The teaching is good overall. One third of lessons are very good or better, and only six per cent of lessons are unsatisfactory, but almost a quarter of lessons are no more than satisfactory. There is most very good or better teaching, and also most unsatisfactory teaching, in Year 9.



<b>Summary of teaching in Year 7 – Year 11</b>					
	Number of lessons	Percentage of lessons			
		Excellent/very good	Good or better	Satisfactory or better	Unsatisfactory
Year 7	33	24	70	97	3
Year 8	29	31	72	93	7
Year 9	33	39	61	88	12
Year 10	36	36	75	94	6
Year 11	49	31	65	92	8

19. The quality of teaching and learning varies during the six-period school day. On the Monday of the inspection, inspectors logged the period of the 80 lessons that they observed. The proportion of lessons that were very good or excellent rose from lesson 1 to lesson 2, and then fell back gradually during the day. It may be that all structures of the school day have their ebb and flow. But the first lesson in this school begins early, at 0825, and the lunch break of 35 minutes is brief, with many students spending much of this time in a queue for lunch, or a crowded and resonant lunch hall. The strength of the ebb and flow observed at Tomlinscote suggests that, while the school may not wish to reconsider the structure of its school day, its chosen structure may require teaching that takes place in periods 1, 5 and 6 to be particularly engaging if it is to succeed.

#### Very good teaching over the school day



20. The teachers have very good command of their subjects, are enthusiastic, and generally insist on high standards of behaviour. They plan their teaching with care. Teaching assistants and support teachers are well prepared for lessons and add to the quality of teaching by helping to move students' learning forward. Learning resources are chosen well, and used effectively, but there is relatively little use of computers, and the school's small number of interactive whiteboards are frequently utilised only as surfaces for projection. The homework tasks that are set are generally interesting and extend the learning that takes place during lessons. Teachers work to promote equality of opportunity through their teaching, which is frequently of mixed-ability classes.

21. Students respond to effective teaching with engagement, application and, almost without exception, high standards of behaviour. They concentrate, use time well, and work effectively in groups, including the mixed-gender groups that are usual in most classrooms.

22. Much of the teaching takes place in mixed-ability groups. These are often taught effectively. However, Year 7 lessons in modern foreign languages are sometimes not pitched so that students who studied a language in primary school, through the provision available from the language college, build on and consolidate, rather than repeat, their earlier learning.
23. The main negative features of lessons that were unsatisfactory, or that were present to some degree within lessons that were satisfactory on balance, included, in descending order of frequency: low concentration by students; slow pace; an unclear lesson structure; a lesson structure that did not promote progress; unclear lesson objectives; low expectations or lack of challenge; students' poor attitudes to learning; teachers' lack of class management skills; insufficient focus on the subject being taught; a dominating style of teaching; weaknesses in students' prior knowledge; students' difficulty with learning independently.
24. Cluster students and other students with special educational needs make good progress in response to specific literacy and numeracy teaching. Teachers use many different strategies to stimulate students, maintain their interest and consolidate teaching points. Students learn to recognise their strengths and develop the ability to manage their difficulties so that their basic skills develop steadily and they cope better in ordinary lessons. Specialist teaching (literacy, numeracy, cognitive thinking) focuses well on students' individual needs following regular assessment. Individual education plans are reviewed termly, and new targets reflect students' progress and changing needs. ICT is used extensively to draft work and when improving it and producing a best version. Students working in the SEN Base are competent users of format and presentation tools, and are developing efficient keyboarding skills.

### *Example of outstanding practice*

**One particularly good lesson prepared a group of Year 10 students with SEN to study a Sherlock Holmes novel: the students learnt about the features of the 'detective genre' and began to identify them in this particular book.** They discussed the plot and proposed suspects. They read long passages of a simplified version of the book (produced by SEN staff) expressively.

25. In Years 10 and 11, work for students with SEN focuses on the development of higher-order literacy and thinking skills; there is an increasing emphasis on the consolidation of subject-based learning; the understanding of complex subject-specific language and on strategies for revision. This enables students with SEN to address work in ordinary lessons which might otherwise have been too difficult for them. In this area too, SEN teachers have developed a range of practical ways of enabling students to learn, remember and use information. Three Year 11 students used visual skills to learn a diagram of the heart, label it and prepare a revision card.
26. Support in ordinary lessons (mainly provided by teaching assistants) enables students with learning and concentration difficulties to engage with their work, to complete tasks at a level appropriate for their ability, and become more confident. Where some advance planning has been possible, the skills of supporting staff are more fully used, for example, in the preparation of differentiated worksheets which enable the students to keep up with the pace of the lesson.
27. Some subject teachers are very good at varying the pace and type of activities in the lesson, so that all the students, including students with SEN, could take part in the lesson with some success. This was done by judicious use of practical activities, discussion, choral work and

drawing. In a few lessons, where there was little pace or change of activity, students with difficulties in learning became restless and did not get as much as they could have from their work.

28. The assessment of students' work is good overall. It is thorough and constructive, used to respond to individual needs, and informs students' understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. However, there is considerable variation in the quality of practice between departments, with students receiving too little written feedback in some subjects, and in some classes within subjects. Self-marking is used widely as part of assessment for learning, and also as an approach to reducing teachers' workload. In some subjects, including modern foreign languages, students are not always able to mark their work with the accuracy of a teacher, and so the materials that they use for revision contain errors. The school does not have a central system for the management of assessment, or an overall co-ordinator of assessment. Assessment is very successful in science.

### **Sixth form**

29. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good overall. None of the teaching was unsatisfactory, and only two per cent of the learning. Because of the relatively small teaching groups in the sixth form, students receive ample individual attention from teachers, all of whom are expert in their subjects. Their achievement is diminished in some cases by weak patterns of attendance, and lack of understanding of the need to consolidate their learning between lessons.

### **The curriculum**

The overall breadth and balance of the curriculum are satisfactory. However, the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for ICT, citizenship, religious education and music.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The breadth and balance of the curriculum are sound in Years 10-11, and good in Years 7-9.
- A group of students receiving separate work-related provision has recently been established in Year 10.
- The specialist curriculum for students with SEN is carefully planned to address their individual needs and to enhance their ability to access a full range of mainstream subjects.
- There is a very good programme of enrichment activities.
- The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in ICT, citizenship, religious education and music.
- There is a less innovatory approach to the curriculum than in many other schools.
- Students' access to the music curriculum is constrained by the poor accommodation available.

### **Commentary**

30. The school operates a 29-period week consisting of six 50-minute lessons on the first four days of the week, and five 50-minute lessons, plus an extended tutor period, on Friday. The six 50-minute lessons are grouped in three pairs of lessons, with five minutes of movement time allowed between the lessons in each pair. The teaching day begins early, at 0825, and ends at 1450. The lunch break is only 35 minutes. The second registration of the day for students in

Years 10 and 11 takes place before lunch. A daily 15-minute tutor period is used on some days for assembly.

31. The curriculum in Years 7-9 has good breadth and balance overall. Setting is used only in mathematics, and in science from Year 9, but the teachers generally teach mixed-ability classes well. The weekly allocation of time for physical education, 100 minutes, is below the national recommended minimum of 120 minutes, but the subject is usually timetabled for a double period (including movement time), so that minimal time is spent changing, and the time available for teaching is adequate. The curriculum includes separate lessons of drama, ICT and religious education, but statutory requirements are not met in respect of some classes that do not study music in Year 7. The time available for citizenship, which is taught during tutor time, is too short. The curriculum is strongly subject based, with little sign of the cross-curricular or intra-subject innovation that is now frequently found in secondary schools. There is relatively little use of computers in subjects other than ICT, and the school rarely exploits the potential of its interactive whiteboards.
32. A very small number of students do not begin to study a modern foreign language until Year 8 if their language and communication or literacy difficulties justify this, and the student and parents agree. The other students all study one modern foreign language in Year 7, and also take a second language from Year 8. The school supports a national aim to diversify taught languages by providing three first languages, French, German and Spanish, throughout the school to A-level. The school has a policy of allocating Year 7 students to the first language that many of them studied in primary school, typically as part of the community programme of the language college, but some students and parents report that some students were obliged to begin a new language, or had to change their first language during the Year 7 course, because they were moved to a new tutor group. The teaching of Year 7 modern foreign language lessons sometimes does not capitalise upon students' learning at primary school, because it treats all the students as novices. The time allocation for the second language is very short. Nine out of ten students study two languages until the end of Year 9.
33. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has adequate breadth and balance. Strengths include the provision in science: all the students study either the double award GCSE, or the three separate science GCSEs. A weekly lesson of social education delivers a modular programme with some content related to citizenship and religious education, but too little to meet statutory requirements in either of these subjects. Most students do not study ICT, and the school does not assess all students in ICT, and report the results to parents. There is very little vocational or alternative provision to meet the needs of students whose aspirations and abilities are not primarily academic. There is setting in mathematics, science and physical education, and there are 'top sets' in German and Spanish in Year 10. As in Years 7-9, the teachers generally teach mixed-ability groups effectively, including in English.
34. Just over a fifth of students retain two languages to GCSE, a much smaller proportion than usually found in a language college. Low retention could be linked to the low time allocation to the second language, especially a single weekly lesson (about 3 per cent of curriculum time) in Year 9, so that students are aware of much slower progress than in their first language. Year 10 students are offered a two-week intensive course in a new language, such as Japanese or Dutch.
35. Careers education is planned across Years 7-13 and delivered effectively in Years 10 and 11 through the social education programme. A well-planned careers day for Years 9-13 further enhances students' understanding of employment, training and education opportunities beyond the ages of 16 and 19. The Connexions service supports students' future choices through

personal interviews. Further experiences of 'real work' situations are gained through a one-week work experience placement. The programme enables the students to experience a valuable practical work-based learning environment.

36. The languages department contributes well to learning for citizenship, especially in Years 10-12, through discussing topics such as the protection of the environment and European political systems. It contributes well to geography and history through raising awareness of other countries and especially through intensive teaching in the foreign language of history and geography topics. The teacher in charge has disseminated the success of this initiative at national conferences.
37. Cluster students have access to the full curriculum. Timetables for support are drawn up during the autumn term of Year 7 following careful assessment, and adjusted in the light of termly evaluations of each student's needs and progress. A balance between the provision of individual, small stepped programmes and support for the curriculum enables most students with SEN to make good progress and achieve as well as they can.
38. A very good programme of enrichment activities is provided, focusing on the arts, sports and modern foreign languages. Some students gain local, regional and international honours in sports, and many more students enhance their sporting life through local sports clubs. However, the shortening of the lunch break to 35 minutes has halved the weekly 'slots' available for extra activities, and it is now harder for students to sustain extra activities in both sports and the arts. The languages department provides significant enrichment to the curriculum by offering to large numbers of students a very high number of study visits, educational visits and opportunities for work experience in France, Germany, Spain and Japan.
39. The match of teachers to the curriculum is good overall. But despite significant effort within the school, difficulties of staff recruitment adversely affect learning in some classes, including several language classes. The administrative staff that are available to support all areas of the curriculum make a substantial contribution to its effectiveness.
40. SEN staff work most extensively with students in Years 7-8, where there are the largest number of students with SEN and where their work will have most impact. In Years 7-9, students work individually or are organised in groups of two to four students with similar needs. These groups may include Cluster students, other students with statements, and students at School Action Plus. This shared working gives the students the best opportunity of a successful and rounded school experience, and enables the school to make effective use of resources. In Years 10 and 11, while a few students may still require small, stepped literacy programmes, most of the work of SEN staff is directed towards enabling the students to engage successfully with GCSE programmes. Students work with increasing confidence and independence as a result of this approach. In particular, SEN staff support a new Year 10 Work-Related Group in English and mathematics, so that students can reinforce work done in mainstream lessons in smaller groups. The two SEN teachers involved in this provision liaise closely with subject colleagues to develop appropriate teaching styles in mainstream lessons as well as to organise and support preparation and follow-up of coursework topics.
41. More generally, teaching assistants support students in a wide range of lessons. While they focus their work on students with statements, they also support, as far as possible, all students who need help. They make a valuable contribution to the classroom climate and enable students with SEN to develop independent learning skills, as well as address the lesson tasks.

42. SEN staff provide briefing sheets for all staff about the full range of SEN in the school with suggestions as to the teaching strategies most likely to be successful. Very full individual education plans inform teachers of the most successful ways of working with individual students. Whilst these are made available to staff in a variety of formats, they are not as widely used as they should be to inform lesson planning and classroom management.
43. The resources for learning, including those in the Learning Resource Centre, are good overall, although the provision of computers in most subjects is inadequate, and prevents the coverage of the full national curriculum in subjects including music. The language resources are good. A multi-media room enables students to profit from a wide range of listening, visual and reading material which keeps them up-to-date with current idiom and events in countries where their targeted languages are spoken. The department has only one electronic whiteboard, observed being used as a surface for projection, rather than interactively.
44. The accommodation is also good overall, but parts of the drama accommodation are unsatisfactory, and the accommodation for music is poor.

### **Sixth form**

45. The sixth form curriculum offers a wide range of AS and A2 courses. It also offers some vocational courses, but these tend to be less popular with students. Some of its courses are offered in collaboration with a nearby school. The teaching groups are generally small. All students have a weekly lesson of general studies, and higher attaining students are invited to join a course in critical thinking. About a third of the sixth formers study one language to AS or A2 and a few study two. In addition a small number of students join community classes, for example, four in Japanese.
46. The school does not meet the statutory requirement for students to study religious education in the sixth form. It has not audited the contributions made to students' religious education by subjects including critical thinking and general studies, or considered organising day conferences with religious themes, visits from philosophers and religious leaders, or visits to centres of religion or theological conferences.
47. The school encourages students to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in citizenship. Students assume responsibility as sports leaders or as student president, and as members of the sixth form council and school council. Many sixth formers help younger students to organise and support charity fund raising. Service to the community is required, and students take this seriously, by working with younger students as mentors, joining in with environmental projects, or engaging in voluntary work in the wider community.
48. Subject areas contribute to students' enquiry about citizenship. Individual photography projects such as the analysis of photomontage work used by Nazis and anti Nazis make students think about propaganda issues. General studies lessons give students opportunities to consider political, economic and social trends, and the critical thinking lessons attended by a few students teach them to challenge their assumptions. Modern foreign language students discuss European issues and read texts that allow students to compare life under different political regimes.
49. The careers programme for sixth formers includes a mock interview, supported by the local rotary club.

50. The SEN department has no formal responsibility for sixth form students. Support, mentoring and study skills training are provided by sixth form tutors. However, the acting head of sixth form liaises closely with senior SEN staff, and individual students use the facilities in the SEN Base and, at times, turn to SEN staff for advice and guidance.

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

Students are well supported. They receive good advice and guidance in the main school and very good in the sixth form college. Students' views are valued and there are good opportunities for them to contribute to the life and work of the school and college. Health and safety procedures are unsatisfactory because there is inconsistency between departments in the implementation of the risk assessment policy.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are good induction and support arrangements for students entering Year 7.
- Good support and care assists students with their all-round development.
- There is a high level of mutual trust and respect between students and staff.
- Good advice and guidance helps students make informed decisions at each key step of their education.
- Records of risk assessment are not consistently maintained by all departments with the result that health and safety procedures are unsatisfactory.
- Students with SEN are well cared for as they progress through the school; SEN staff ensure that statutory requirements are met.

### **Commentary**

51. The pastoral teams support their students well and create a caring ethos that encourages them to work hard and do their best. The inspectors do not agree with the negative views expressed by some students in the pre-inspection survey. Students are provided with good advice and guidance for their academic and personal development, based on well-established assessment and monitoring procedures. There is very good awareness of the needs of vulnerable students and their families and good arrangements for child protection. Those responsible for child protection are experienced and well trained. The school has good connections with educational welfare, social services and other relevant external agencies and calls for their intervention and support when it becomes necessary.
52. The school has an agreed health and safety policy but its implementation is unsatisfactory. There are inconsistencies between departments in the procedures for recording the levels of risk and recommended control procedures following risk assessment surveys. For example, in the science and physical education departments recording procedures are good but in design and technology and for whole-school public areas there are no formal records of assessed risk with recommended strategies for dealing with identified risk. Day-to-day health and safety practice is satisfactory because all staff have a high level of awareness of the need to ensure the school environment is healthy and safe. Before the conclusion of the inspection, action to ensure that all areas of risk were being appropriately assessed and recorded was in hand. The risk assessment procedures for school trips are satisfactory. Students are well supervised and taught to use school equipment safely and there is good provision for administering first aid. There are good health and safety arrangements when students undertake work experience or participate in work-related learning programmes. The school was unable to assure inspectors that its freelance instrumental teachers have had checks.

53. The personal, social and health education programme ensures that students have a good understanding of the benefits of pursuing a healthy lifestyle and of observing high standards of hygiene and personal care. The school is cleaned and maintained to a good standard. The relationships and mutual trust between students and between students and staff are good. Students are very confident that should they have any concerns or need to seek help that staff will listen and provide good quality advice and guidance. The student year group councils and whole-school council provide effective consultative links between the wider student body and the senior management team. There are good arrangements for the induction and support of students when they join the school in Year 7, with trained student mentors available to every student during their first year.
54. The provision outlined in statements of SEN is carefully implemented, reviewed annually and monitored and evaluated through individual education plans. New targets set each term show students' changing needs and progress. Each student with a statement has an allocated key worker, and external professionals from the LEA or the Health Service are involved as appropriate. Students make good use of the availability of SEN staff before and after school and at lunchtimes.
55. SEN students usually make strong relationships with SEN staff that continue throughout their school career. The theme of guidance and support runs through much of the teaching in the SEN Base where students are specifically taught to learn more independently and recognise their skills and abilities.
56. The SEN department is active in the 14 to 19 careers process (although currently most students with SEN leave at the end of Year 11). School-based careers interviews inform the 14+ statutory review of the statement. SEN staff meet with parents and students for an extended interview during Year 11. The head of the Cluster keeps track of the post-16 destinations of Cluster students and this forms part of the LEA audit of the provision.

### **Sixth form**

57. The advice and guidance afforded to students in the sixth form are very good. Their work is regularly assessed and there is a very favourable ratio of tutors to the number of students on most of the available courses. The sixth form student council has a significant influence on the life and work of the school. The support provided for students and their families when considering their options for higher education is very good. Some sixth form students return to the SEN Base to use the facilities for quiet working, or look to SEN staff for mentoring.

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

The school and sixth form college have established good working partnerships with parents. The majority of parents are pleased with all aspects of the academic and pastoral provision. The school has developed very good links with the wider community and students benefit greatly from many of these. Relationships with other schools and colleges are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students derive great benefit from the good working partnership the school has established with parents.
- The school has established good dialogue with parents that keeps them well informed.
- The school enjoys a high level of sponsorship and support as a result of its very good links with the wider community.



- Primary schools and the local community benefit greatly from the support the school gives them for teaching modern foreign languages.
- SEN staff give a high priority to communication with parents to make sure that students with SEN receive consistent messages about work and expectations.

## **Commentary**

58. The pastoral teams work hard to establish close relationships with parents and to provide them with the information that enables them to participate fully in their children's learning and choices. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with the quality of care and standards of education provided by the school. The continuous dialogue between the school and parents ensures that their opinions and suggestions are noted and that any concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively. Parents say they feel comfortable when approaching the school and know to whom they need to talk. The school provides parents with a regular flow of information about the curriculum and the many events and activities that it promotes. The parent teacher association, which is very supportive, also communicates on a regular basis with the wider parent body.
59. The annual progress reports provide a very good overview of students' personal and academic development, with a clear indication of progress and attainment. Good use is made of students' self-evaluation as part of the reporting process. Consultation evenings, where parents are able to meet with tutors and subject teachers, are well attended. The agenda for the consultation evenings often includes a special presentation on an aspect of the curriculum or an extra-curricular activity. The heads of each year group, who are the pastoral team leaders, contact parents at an early stage if they encounter any problems that might inhibit a student's effective learning. The recent improvement in attendance is partly down to improved co-operation from the parents of students who were falling below the school's high expectations of regular attendance.
60. The school has very good links with other schools and colleges. The feeder primary schools are very well supported in the teaching of modern foreign languages by the school's language department staff. There is close collaboration with the local cluster of schools. Members of the senior management team work closely with the local education authority to support other schools. The school principal has chaired the Surrey Schools Forum for over 2 years. One of the vice principals undertook a two-term secondment to help a school in special measures. Another vice principal has worked closely with the local education authority in a project to oversee and report on Science Laboratory provision in all 53 secondary schools within the authority. In pursuing its role as a language college the leader of the language department has made presentations to local and national audiences. The school also provides for teacher training placements.
61. The school has very good links with the wider community. It provides community language and family learning courses and these are well attended by parents and others from the wider community. The sports centre is run as a dual-use facility for students and the wider public. Many locally based national and international companies support the school through sponsorship and by offering prizes and rewards to students to celebrate their academic, personal and sporting achievements. Senior personnel from businesses and other public services and institutions contribute to the personal, social, health and citizenship programme and school assemblies. Extensive use is also made of local business contacts to provide students with work experience and to support the extended vocational learning programmes.

62. Students benefit greatly from the wide range of overseas trips that provide them with first-hand experience of countries where the languages they are studying are spoken. The most recent countries visited have included Germany, France, Spain and Japan. There are good arrangements to help students decide on further or higher education and to support them during the transfer to their chosen destination. Overall the partnership with parents, other schools and the wider community has been significantly developed since the previous inspection. Parents now support the work of the school well and the outreach into the community and other educational establishments are now very good compared to the previous inspection, which judged all of these areas as satisfactory.
63. The school gained a Languages for Export Award in 2003. As part of its language college initiatives, it has good links with the community. It provides teachers of French, German and Spanish for primary languages in four feeder schools and language clubs in five. The school also offers community languages classes, currently in French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish, which are free to Tomlinscote students. Others pay a small contribution towards resources.
64. SEN staff have good relationships with parents and work with them to address students' needs, especially when these relate to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Parents attend annual review meetings and are included in decisions about the students' education. Students' planners are used effectively as a communication tool and are checked at the start of every lesson to make sure that homework is correctly recorded and attempted and notes from parents are read.
65. SEN staff are readily available on the telephone and attend all parents' evenings. They are proactive in making appointments to see the parents of relevant students. This relationship starts in the case of Cluster students in Year 5, when students are first considered for a place. All students with SEN follow an enhanced induction programme, so that they are familiar with the school before they start.

### **Sixth form**

66. The engagement between the pastoral team and the parents of students in the sixth form college is very good. Advice and guidance are shared and parents are closely involved in the decisions leading to the selection of courses and the choices that need to be made about further and higher education. Students are very well supported when they transfer to their chosen destination. All students in the sixth form college work in the community for at least one hour a week.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall the leadership and management of the school are **good**. The governance of the school is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the principal, and of other key staff, is good.
- The governing body challenges and supports senior managers, and helps to shape the vision and direction of the school.
- Difficult issues around the budget and recruitment have been well managed.
- Staff review and development are very good, and there are very supportive induction programmes for newly qualified staff.

- The integration of the Literacy Cluster and the SEN Department has produced a strong, well-organised provision that benefits both students with SEN and the wider school community.
- The links between subject leaders and their managers vary in effectiveness, and this leads to unevenness in the ability of the school to evaluate itself, and act accordingly.
- Some weaknesses in the deployment of teachers, including timetabling, limit the achievement of students.
- There is insufficient monitoring of the effectiveness of the large volume of lesson observation that is taking place within subjects.
- There is no effective system for tracking overall student progress.
- The school does not fulfil all its statutory duties.

## Commentary

67. Since the last inspection, the governing body has improved its own organisation and committee structure and governors are now providing greater challenge to the school, including senior managers. They support the school well and the flow of information between governors and the school is good. Although they have a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, this has not been translated into an influential strategic role. They do not yet set clear priorities or policies for future development or sufficiently challenging goals for improvement. They have not ensured that all students participate in a daily act of collective worship, or that provision for citizenship, religious education in Years 10-13, ICT in Years 10-11 and music in Year 7 meet statutory requirements.
68. The leadership provided by the principal and key staff is good. It reflects a clear vision for the school, is purposeful, and is underpinned by very high aspirations for the school. The senior managers are committed members of staff who are role models to staff and students, and who work hard to help the school meet its aims. The leadership of subjects is effective.
69. The principal is well supported by an effective and hard-working senior management team. The majority of middle managers are providing good and sometimes very good management through effective planning, well developed schemes of work and the monitoring of teaching and learning. However, there is no overall co-ordination of the large volume of lesson observation that is taking place in departments. Some teaching in need of support has been identified, and appropriate support made available, but other weak practice has been missed, and there is good and very good practice in areas of the school which is not being shared.
70. At their best, for example, in science, the links between senior managers and middle managers are very effective. However, the leaders of some other subjects are not always challenged or supported sufficiently by their link senior manager, for example, when analysing, and then learning from, a disappointing set of examination results. The links between subject leaders and their managers vary in effectiveness, and this leads to unevenness in the quality of provision, and in the ability of the school to evaluate itself, and act accordingly. The lack of a school system for tracking students' progress across subjects also leads to inconsistent practice across departments. The management of the school's pastoral system is good, and there are effective links between heads of year and senior management.
71. The school has an established cycle of evaluation which is well focused on the school's improvement plan. Evaluation forms are completed annually and reviewed externally. A number of initiatives, like the Investors in People process, have been completed in order to support the school's self-evaluation. An effective review of lesson observation within the school's performance management system is currently being conducted and all staff are

involved in this process. Not all managers are consistently linking the analysis and interpretation of data with self-evaluation and school improvement.

72. A very good, comprehensive staff development programme supports the work of all staff in the school. There are strong links to the school's improvement plan, but it is also tailored to meet the needs of individual staff as identified through the review process. Effective use is made of staff time by planning to deliver much of the programme within the school. Training days are very well planned.
73. The induction programme for newly qualified teachers is particularly thorough, with regular fortnightly themed meetings after school for all newly qualified staff and timetabled weekly mentoring sessions for individuals. There are many opportunities given to observe other teachers both in the school and elsewhere.
74. The school works hard to attract and retain well-qualified and committed teachers, and has good selection procedures. The school has introduced a number of innovative practices to meet the needs of the workforce remodelling legislation, and has successfully prioritised support to non-tutorial staff during this process. Administrative support for all departments has been in place for a number of years, and is effective, giving very good support to the curriculum. New members of staff are very well supported in their posts, and have regular meetings with line managers as part of their induction process. The deployment of teachers through the timetable is, in a significant number of situations, unsatisfactory, and is having a detrimental impact on standards. There is no music teacher available to teach some classes in Year 7: these classes are not receiving their entitlement to the National Curriculum, and their progress during the first six years of statutory music provision has been disrupted. There are too many classes that are split between two or more teachers for the same subject. In English, for example, 19 of 29 classes in Years 7-9 have more than one teacher for their four lessons each week, and three classes have three different teachers. In modern foreign languages, there are split classes, and one class has had no regular teacher for one of its language lessons in the current year. In all the subjects where teaching is split, teachers speak of receiving information from partner teachers about the progress of lessons. But this is no substitute for having taught a related lesson oneself, and inspectors who observed the same class being taught successively by two teachers found that the momentum generated by the first teacher was rarely sustained.
75. Other timetabling and deployment issues adversely affect the language college: several classes in Years 10 and 11 are small so that reorganisation could increase the staff available to teach in other years; current school timetable blocking makes it impossible to create a 'top set' in Year 10 for French in order to match the practice in German and Spanish; in some classes the ability range is very wide and a few students who achieve little because of absence or poor attitudes slow the progress of all. Several parents and older students complained that they could not continue in Year 7 the language learned in primary schools. In the current year considerable effort has been made to group those who learned French or German, but Spanish is taught in only one primary school, so that inevitably these students are mixed with beginners. In Year 7 written work and lessons, there was little evidence of teachers building on languages learnt at primary school. The school carries out its specialist role and meets its specific objectives satisfactorily.
76. Work for students with SEN has been ably, but unobtrusively, led by two joint acting SENCOs since September 2004. The department is well managed: students needs are assessed and progress monitored and evaluated; staff are well deployed and work as a coherent team; teaching in the SEN Base is lively and effective; administration is efficient and resources well

used. Statutory requirements are met and there is the basis of a very good SEN Policy, currently being revised and in draft form.

77. Strategic development is less secure, because the acting SENCOs are not in a position to make changes which could affect the wider school. Good practice in the use of teaching assistants is not being shared with subjects where teaching assistants find that they can offer only ‘at the elbow’ support for one or two students, because their potential has not been considered when lessons were planned. Cross-curricular liaison between departments over provision for students with SEN needs to be re-established.
78. The Cluster is very well led and managed, a judgement that is endorsed by the LEA, which carries out an annual audit of the provision. Students make good progress and the provision has been adapted to accommodate students with a wider range of complex SEN. The head of Cluster has taken additional training to extend her expertise to provide effectively for, in particular, students with autistic spectrum disorders, and language and communication needs. Departmental staff and other interested teachers have taken part in follow-up training that she has arranged.
79. The school’s finances are managed effectively on a day-to-day basis, and the principles of best value are applied when making spending decisions. There is an audit every two years by the local authority which confirms that the school’s finances are handled efficiently. Very good quality information is provided to governors and the principal. Significant cuts to the school’s budget last year resulted in a licensed deficit over two years. Savings have been made in order to bring spending into line with the school’s reduced income. In making difficult decisions, the school has examined a range of options and evaluated the effects of different savings before setting the budget.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,893,957
Total expenditure	4,950,156
Expenditure per student	3,300

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	- 25,547
Balance carried forward to the next year	- 56,199

**Sixth form**

80. Governors, the principal and staff have worked hard to resolve the difficult issues surrounding recruitment to the sixth form. Recruitment is effectively prioritised in their work. A number of initiatives have been explored to address the budgetary pressures which this situation causes, including working more closely with neighbouring sixth forms. Costing of the sixth form is undertaken by the school to ensure that it is cost effective and not being subsidised by the main school. The school has made plans to accommodate the retrospective claw-back of central funding which became necessary when sixth form numbers did not match predictions.
81. The acting head of sixth form is being well supported by senior managers and an effective team of tutors in the day-to-day management of the sixth form. There has been a focus on improving the attendance and punctuality of students this year. A-level teachers have a good record of students’ progress on their courses. However, there is no system for tracking an individual’s progress across subjects, and, as a result, underachievement is not always addressed early enough.

82. The deployment of staff through the sixth form timetable is in some instances unsatisfactory where students are unable to attend all their classes because two of their courses are timetabled together.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work-related learning (WRL)**

The provision in work-related learning is **satisfactory**.

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

- Leadership ensures clear vision for the cross-curricular development of WRL.
- Work experience and careers education make a sound contribution to students' personal development.
- WRL activities are not co-ordinated and monitored with rigour across the curriculum.
- Students' progress is not monitored and recorded sufficiently.

#### **Commentary**

83. In Years 7 to 9, some WRL is included across the curriculum to start developing the students' understanding, skills and knowledge relevant to the work place. This is delivered primarily through English, science, geography and design and technology. In Years 10 and 11 students' understanding of the World of Work is further developed by increased cross-curricular activity.
84. Careers education is planned throughout Years 7 to 13 and delivered well in Years 10 and 11 through the PSHE programme. A well-planned Careers day for Years 9-13 further enhances students' understanding of employment, training and education opportunities after the ages of 16 and 19. Further experiences of real work situations are gained through the one-week work experience programme and, for a very small number of students in Years 10 and 11, through a planned programme of WRL activities. These programmes, ably supported by Trident, enable students to experience practical work-based learning environments.
85. There are limited vocationally accredited courses in the main school and sixth form and no increased flexible programmes. The school recognises that the opportunities for all students to experience WRL activities are limited.
86. The teaching of WRL cross-curricular programmes of study is satisfactory. Only in art, design and technology (particularly food technology), modern foreign languages and PSHE are WRL concepts taught explicitly. The opportunities for students to learn about employment and work in a practical setting are restricted.
87. There is a paucity of enrichment activities enabling students to link with work and employment. Sixth form students benefit from a mock interview supported by the local rotary club and all Year 10 and 11 students have an interview with representatives of the Connexions service. However, some aspects of students' achievement in WRL are unsatisfactory.
88. The school has only recently addressed the framework for WRL and Careers education. An audit of curriculum areas in supporting WRL confirms that coverage of the QCA Framework can be achieved through curriculum activities. However, these are not rigorously monitored and consequently do not form a balanced programme throughout the main school and sixth

form, thus giving students deep insight into the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for employment.

89. The school recognises that WRL is an area for development. A policy has been ratified, and discussion of it is taking place. There is a plan for developing WRL across the school. INSET for staff is still to be provided. However, the school has a basis for future development to add to existing good practice.
90. The school has a vision and a strategy for WRL, which is led effectively. However, the implementation of an effective programme of WRL is, as the school acknowledges, at an early stage of development.

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

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

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

##### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Students attain well above average standards.
- A well-planned curriculum supports the teaching.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and work together well as a team.
- A positive learning atmosphere is established in lessons.
- The teaching of literature is a particular strength.
- Boys' attainment continues to lag behind that of the girls.
- Assessment information is not used consistently to inform the teaching.
- Too many teaching groups in Years 7-9 are taught by more than one teacher.
- Levels of challenge are insufficient in some lessons.
- The department has limited access to computers.

##### **Commentary**

91. Unvalidated results in English in the 2004 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. Nearly nine in ten students reached Level 5 or above and over half reached Level 6 or above. There has been an upward trend in the Year 9 test results over the past three years. Girls did better than boys, but by a margin no larger than the national difference. Tomlinscote takes in a higher than average proportion of students who did well at primary school. The progress made in English by students between Year 7 and Year 9 was average in 2004 in comparison with schools whose students had a similar prior attainment.
92. At GCSE last year, over three quarters of the Year 11 students gained a C grade or above in English language, and four fifths did so in literature. These results were well above national averages but a few percentage points down on the previous year in language. Girls again did better than boys, by a margin a little larger than the national difference. Girls also gained more of the highest grades, A\* and A, than did the boys. Some boys perform outstandingly well, but improving the attainment of boys as a group remains an issue for the department. It is not addressed specifically in the current English action plan.
93. The quality of speaking and listening is high. Most students are articulate in answering questions and in discussion, although opportunities provided for this vary too much between teachers. In some lessons, only brief contributions are expected and there is little extension of students' responses. A good example came in a Year 10 lesson on 'Othello', when a lively discussion on outsiders in today's and Shakespeare's society led into a study of relationships in the early scenes of the play. Students read aloud well for the most part, but they need more frequent and regular practice at both key stages in order to gain confidence and learn to read expressively. They use a range of appropriate vocabulary and listen well to each other. They tend not to be so effective in making formal presentations as when speaking informally in a group.



94. Most of the students are capable and fluent readers. Those who need extra help in Years 7-9 receive it from booster classes. There is much enthusiasm for various kinds of fiction and a sharing of favourites through book reviews. Students in Years 7-9 participate each year in reading new novels contributed to a national competition. In lessons they respond very well, sometimes in a mature and perceptive way, to the well-chosen range of literary and other texts selected for them. Wider reading is promoted but not monitored systematically. It is sometimes a disadvantage when texts studied in class are not allowed home for further reading and homework. This can hold back the ablest readers who would benefit from textual study and extension tasks.

*Example of outstanding practice*

**A Year 9 English lesson devoted to the opening scenes of Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'.** Students, having read these scenes in an earlier lesson, were given ten minutes of quietly absorbed concentration to draft a letter as if from Macbeth to his wife or another character in the play, recounting his experience on meeting the witches. Prompts on the board asked 'Who would you tell? What would you say?' This led students of all abilities, a few of whom received individual encouragement from the teacher, to write in styles they felt appropriate, either modern or in a Shakespearian idiom. Some of the letters were read out and a lively discussion ensued concerning Macbeth's feelings, with notes being taken spontaneously by the students. Judicious questioning from the teacher related back to the text, prompting thoughts about the dialogue as well as Shakespeare's presentation of character and motive. Their earlier reading was enriched and enhanced. The teacher sensibly did not keep rigidly to the details of the lesson plan but allowed students to share their evaluations of each other's work.

95. A very good range of writing is attempted, sometimes for pleasure and by students' own choice. Its quality throughout Years 7-11 is above and sometimes well above average, including poems using different models, diary and letter writing, discursive and persuasive prose. In a Year 9 lesson arising from the witches' scene in 'Macbeth', students rapidly drafted a letter as if from the hero to his wife, which spontaneously made use of a poetic idiom: 'I have met with creatures beyond the human. They put before me a chalice of curiosity.' Although students write accurately in the main, there is a wide range of capability. They master technical terms as they move up the school, but rather too many common words are frequently mis-spelled. Errors of this kind are not being picked up sufficiently by teachers so that improvement can take place over time.
96. Male students in Years 10 and 11 are rather more likely than female students to present their work untidily and to display misconceptions or inaccuracies of verbal expression. In some students' folders, much work of a similar level is represented, without enough evidence of improvement in quality or refinement. This is sometimes because areas of weakness have not been identified so that they can be remedied. Students across the ability range make at least satisfactory progress, although middle and higher attainers are not always making the progress of which they are capable.
97. The curriculum for English is well planned and managed. This assists the teachers, including those new to the school, who are well supported. All the teaching groups are mixed-ability. This form of organisation is largely successful in the department. However, the adaptation of tasks to meet the needs of students is developed more effectively by some teachers than others: the school is aware that this is an area needing improvement. Students' work is assessed regularly and information is passed on between teachers as the students move up the school. Individual targets are set, sometimes by the students themselves, but what is known about their strengths and weaknesses is not being used sufficiently to inform the teaching and planning. The marking of exercise books is inconsistent in quality and frequency across the department: some students receive too much generalised praise which does not give them enough guidance as to how to improve.

98. The quality of the teaching is good overall and at best excellent. All the teachers have good subject knowledge. Where the teaching is most effective, lessons are lively and enthusiastic, with plentiful interaction which enhances learning. Consistent use is made of brisk starter activities, often imaginatively leading on to the main topic. Guidance from the national Key Stage 3 Strategy has been well adapted to produce a shared teaching style which is not rigid but allows teachers individual scope. Lessons are carefully planned. In the best of them, the teacher's questions extend understanding by asking for opinions and following up first thoughts, so that the students are encouraged to take the initiative and not remain dependent on the teacher for information. In a few lessons, however, the students are not acquiring this sort of confidence and independence. In these lessons, levels of pace and challenge are insufficient for the higher-attaining students in particular. There is some outstanding practice in the department which needs to be more widely shared. The students' attitudes and behaviour were almost always good; in the lessons where they were expected to contribute frequently in order to make progress, they were excellent.
99. The subject is well led and managed. The department is large and its 11 teachers form an effective team. They are hard working and committed to improvement. The head of subject has two deputies who oversee the two key stages: this is also effective, although what is expected of delegated roles in relation to raising standards and the action plan for improvement could be made clearer. The head of subject has charge of the sixth form provision. There is a clear and helpful department handbook but it does not indicate policy or strategy for the sixth form, such as ways of developing, lower down the school, the skills which students will need. The teaching is carefully monitored with useful guidance to individual teachers. The deployment of teachers in Years 7-9 leads to 19 of the 29 teaching groups having more than one teacher: three groups are each taught by three different teachers for their four lessons a week. Although the teachers liaise well with each other, this is an unsatisfactory situation which needs to be improved.
100. Accommodation for English has improved since the last inspection and is now good, although there is no sixth form seminar room which could act as a focus for exchanges of ideas between the courses. Attractive displays of students' work help to create a flavour of the subject. Book resources in the department and the school library are adequate but not extensive for students' needs. Access to computers was limited in 1999 and remains so, especially for regular use in teaching and learning. Extra-curricular provision such as theatre trips and visiting speakers is good overall. After the last inspection, areas for development included taking more account of the individual targets of students who have SEN; making more use of differentiated tasks; improving the consistency of marking; and raising borrowing rates from the library. Progress has been made in these areas but it has been held up by changes of staff and some difficulty in recruiting new teachers. The improvement made since the last inspection is satisfactory.

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

101. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are also good. Some departments, such as art and design, science, and physical education, are notably successful in the emphasis they give to ways of extending literacy within subjects. The English department has a lead teacher and a policy recently outlined which is as yet too brief and general. A policy exists at whole-school level but some departments are not aware of it: implementation is therefore at an early stage. While there are pockets of good practice, including public speaking competitions in Year 10 and Year 12, and a focus in many subjects on specialist vocabulary, a concerted and co-ordinated drive to raise standards further across the school is not yet in evidence. Foreign languages make a good contribution to developing students' speaking and writing, by

providing greater awareness of grammatical structures, increased vocabulary and practice in abstracting meaning from texts.

### **Modern foreign languages (MFL)**

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

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

- High proportions of students gain A\* /A grades in French, German and Spanish GCSEs.
- Students' language benefits from extensive use of the foreign language in lessons.
- Excellent opportunities for visits and work experience abroad enrich students' curriculum.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent.
- Difficulties in recruiting staff and unsatisfactory timetabling result in too many classes being taught by more than one teacher.

#### **Commentary**

102. In 2004, the school widely exceeded its 2004 target and the national average for students reaching National Curriculum Levels 5 and 6, but did not quite meet its target for Level 7. Current standards in mixed-ability first language Year 9 classes are above the average found nationally overall, with several high attainers reaching very high levels. Standards vary in individual classes from well above those normally seen to below average, in line with the quality and pace of the teaching.
103. In both 2003 and 2004, students' performance at GCSE in French and Spanish was better than the national average, significantly so in French. In German, results were broadly in line with the national average. In all three languages, above average proportions gained grades A\* and A, especially in 2004. Girls performed significantly better than girls nationally in French and Spanish in 2003 and in Spanish in 2004. Boys performed significantly better than boys nationally in French in 2004. German performed well compared with other subjects in the school. Current standards in Year 11 are broadly in line with national averages overall, although they vary from well above to below average.
104. Listening and speaking are the strongest skills because the foreign language is spoken at normal speed most of the time. In classes which have experienced consistently good teaching, written accuracy and the range of language and tenses used by higher attaining students are good. Many average attainers communicate meaning well but with less accuracy. Lower attaining students are usually well supported by teachers and foreign language assistants, and, provided that their attendance is regular and they make an effort, they understand and communicate.
105. Achievement in lessons and work is good overall in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11; it varies in individual lessons from occasionally excellent to unsatisfactory. Excellent and very good achievement is linked to high quality teaching. Students work well throughout the lesson and are shown how to raise the quality of their language. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve in line with others of similar ability in their class. Students with SEN are well known, and most teachers adapt tasks well and help them, so that their achievement is satisfactory or sometimes good. Girls outperform boys overall, but where teaching is lively and tasks interesting, no difference is discernable.

#### ***Example of outstanding practice***

**Year 10 top set starting healthy lifestyle topic using modal verbs.**

This pacy lesson was conducted almost entirely in the foreign language. Phrases about healthy living were drawn from students in a short oral session and practised in a brisk pair work exercise in which students commented on their lifestyles, using I and you; the teacher circulated, helping and correcting. The teacher introduced and students noted grammatical points about modal verbs (English used to ensure understanding), and checked that students could recommend a healthy lifestyle, with 'you/he/she/they should...'. Students practised their recommendations in response to amusing figures on transparencies. They then worked on rapidly spoken, more difficult taped material in booths with individual student control, using dictionaries if needed. This listening task was completed with a high degree of accuracy. The teacher then connected booths so that students were paired randomly to converse, using language learned in the listening exercises. Every minute was used to the full. An excellent quality of learning resulted in really good achievement.

106. Achievement is at times unsatisfactory, when the teacher's expectations are too low, or class control is unsatisfactory; examples were observed in German and Spanish. A few teachers do not extend the most able sufficiently in mixed-ability classes. Learning and achievement in several classes have been, and are, disrupted by staffing changes. In some classes taught by more than one teacher, learning is slower as, despite communication between teachers, some work is repeated.
107. Teaching and learning are good overall; they vary from excellent to unsatisfactory. Well over a third of teaching was excellent or very good, with examples in French, German and Spanish. These well paced lessons have a good variety of activities, are usually fun and expectations are very high.

***Example of outstanding practice***

**Year 8 mixed-ability class. A successful introduction to abstracting detail from a long, challenging, Spanish text. Lesson conducted almost entirely in Spanish.**

In the previous lesson, the teacher had found that students found question words difficult. Five minutes of competitive games were used to reinforce understanding of these words by matching them and their translation. Then about 25 of the most difficult, unknown words in the text were displayed on a transparency, well introduced and rehearsed through chant. Each student then chose five words for three different games of bingo to reinforce recognition. This skilful introduction prepared students thoroughly to understand the questions and skim the text. Lower attaining students were given prompt sheets. All students managed to abstract information from the text to complete the main Spanish questions, and the more able were given additional tricky questions. Most used dictionaries effectively to help them. All were motivated by the tasks, achieved very well and were proud of their success.

108. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in just under a fifth of lessons. In such lessons, behaviour and interest deteriorate if tasks are not well explained, or new language is insufficiently practised, so that students do not know what to do. Such attitudes contrast with good attitudes in most lessons.
109. Leadership is good. Relationships in the department are good, students' views are sought, initiatives are evaluated and foreign language assistants are well deployed. Initiatives linked to Language College status are covered in the curriculum, staffing, resources and management sections of this report. Staff give generously of their time to provide study visits and work experience abroad for many students; for example, nearly 100 went to Germany and about 60 to Spain and France.
110. Management is satisfactory overall, and better at departmental than at whole-school level. Heads of French, German and Spanish share the departmental management. Administration is good, resources and mark books are well organised and excellent guidance is in place for planning visits abroad. Well presented schemes of work would be more helpful to new and temporary staff if suggestions for catering for students of differing abilities were included in

unit plans, rather than in an appendix. Peer lesson observation helps spread good practice, but the monitoring of teaching and marking is not sufficiently rigorous. Despite significant effort on the part of school, difficulties of staff recruitment adversely affect learning in several classes. The department has done well to sustain the high number of foreign visits and enrichment for many students.

111. Improvement since the last good inspection report is satisfactory. Standards are broadly similar in Years 10 and 11 but higher in the first language by Year 9. There is still room for tighter monitoring of teaching. Difficulties of staff recruitment remain. There is no longer a business language course.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students have a very good attitude to learning.
- Relationships in lessons are generally very good and students behave well.
- The department offers good extra-curricular opportunities to students.
- There is some very good and excellent teaching. However, there is also too much unsatisfactory teaching.

### **Commentary**

112. In 2003, the results in national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average in comparison with all schools. In comparison with similar schools they were above average. In 2004 the unvalidated results appear to be above average in comparison with all schools, and average in comparison with similar schools. The trend over time is of improvement, similar to but above the national trend. Although lower than in 2003, the GCSE examination results in 2004 were well above national averages. When taking into account the ability of the students on entry to the school, the results were in line with expectation. Although girls performed better than boys overall at GCSE level, the boys did particularly well in achieving the highest grades of A\* and A.
113. Standards seen during the inspection were above average in all year groups and students of all abilities achieve satisfactorily in all years. For example: Year 7 students demonstrate good numeracy skills in their work on statistics and data handling, Year 9 students deal confidently with simultaneous equations, and by Year 11, most students are familiar with trigonometrical ratios and graphs, and many work well with vectors and can solve inequalities by identifying regions. Students with SEN achieve well and are well supported in lessons. The teaching assistants who work with the department make a positive contribution to the learning of these students.
114. Some teaching is good, very good or excellent. However, there is too much unsatisfactory teaching.
115. Where teaching is good or better, teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour and work. They deal with any misbehaviour quickly and effectively by using humour or a quiet word, ensure a brisk pace of work, and encourage students to work hard throughout the lesson. Teachers use skilled questioning to involve and motivate students, to check understanding and to promote mathematical thinking. They plan well and make objectives clear to the students at the start of the lesson. At the end of the lesson teachers use plenary sessions to consolidate

learning or to quickly assess what students have learnt. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they communicate this enthusiastically to students. Relationships in the classroom are strong and a purposeful working atmosphere is established. As a result, in these lessons, students are good, confident learners who treat each other with respect, engage fully in the lessons and make good progress.

116. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers' objectives for the lesson, their instructions and their explanations are not always clear and the range of approaches used to respond to students' difficulties or questions is too limited. Teachers ignore minor disruption, the pace of the lesson is slow, and students are not clear what they have to do and so become bored or confused and lose interest. Teachers do not always check students' previous knowledge of the topic so that work is repeated unnecessarily and students do not progress well. The department needs to make more use of teaching techniques such as those suggested within the national Key Stage strategy. In particular, better use should be made of starter activities and good practice in the department needs to be shared. Relationships between teachers and students are good in most lessons.
117. The management of the department is satisfactory. Setting arrangements contribute positively to standards; however, there are too many split classes. The department has good schemes of work and the department handbook gives guidance to teachers on school and subject policies and procedures. The head of department monitors the work of all classes by checking students' work in exercise books, checking that homework has been set and by analysing the results of assessed tests taken by students. Teachers assess students' work well, following the school policy, and most students know the level of their work and their targets for improvement. When teachers mark students' work, they advise on corrections and make useful comments. Homework is often marked by the student, at the beginning of the next lesson. Where teachers manage this well, it is successful in identifying any misunderstanding or mistakes and helps students to learn and progress. When teachers manage it less well, it takes too long and much time is wasted for the students who completed the work successfully at home.
118. Accommodation and resources are good. Many of the classrooms have good mathematical displays to support learning, including displays of students' work. Two of the classrooms have interactive whiteboards, although these are not yet used to their full potential. As there are no computers in mathematics classrooms for students' use, the ICT within mathematics is taught in specialist ICT rooms. All classes have access to good quality textbooks, which students can take home for homework.
119. The department offers several different opportunities for extra-curricular activities to students. These include a Year 11 revision class, which is very well staffed, a numeracy club for lower attaining Year 7 students and activities for gifted and talented students.
120. In recent years the department experienced a number of recruitment problems which have impacted on the quality of the provision and led to a lack of innovation. Thus the department has not improved since the last inspection. The leadership of the department needs to be developed to ensure that good practice is shared and extended and that teaching techniques are improved and updated where necessary. The department is now fully staffed and is in a position to be revitalised and to improve quickly.

## **Mathematics across the curriculum**

121. The school has developed a policy for mathematics across the curriculum which enables all departments to identify opportunities for mathematical and numerical learning in their schemes of work. Teachers have received training in this area. Students' skills in mathematics are good enough to enable them to access other areas of the curriculum.
122. Numerical skills and algebra skills are used in many subjects. Unusually in modern foreign languages, students do simple sums in a foreign language and in Year 10 Spanish lessons they use fractions and percentages, in Spanish, when discussing the use of their free time.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in external tests and examinations are well above average.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Students' achievement is good throughout Years 7 to 11 as a result of effective teaching.
- The assessment of students' progress is good.
- A minority of students do not make as much progress as might be expected.
- Students have too few opportunities to use ICT in science lessons.

### Commentary

123. Results in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 in 2004 were higher than in the previous year, when they were well above national averages. The attainment of boys and girls was similar in both years.
124. In 2004, three quarters of the students in Year 11 were entered for double award science examinations; the remainder took separate examinations in chemistry, physics and biology. Similar numbers of boys and girls were entered for each course. Overall results were well above national averages and similar to the previous year. Girls' attainment was higher than boys'. Standards in double award were above the national average but slightly lower than in 2003 because boys did not do as well. In the single sciences, results continued to be very high; nearly all students gained at least grade C in each subject and a large percentage achieved the top grades. Boys did better than in the previous year.
125. From work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are above the national average. Most students have a good understanding of scientific principles and recall scientific ideas well. A significant number of students demonstrate very good evaluative skills and are attaining well above national expectations. Standards overall are not as high as in last year's tests because some students in the middle ability sets make less progress than might be expected. They do not learn the work thoroughly enough. Teachers are aware of this limitation and organise appropriate revision activities. Many students in Year 7 have weaknesses in practical work and lack confidence in using scientific vocabulary, but they make good progress by Year 9 because of effective teaching. As a result, achievement is good.
126. By Year 11, standards are well above average. Most students have a very good understanding of scientific processes and employ investigational skills very well in addressing scientific problems. Achievement in both Years 10 and 11 is good since students consolidate and develop their learning well. Higher attaining students often make very good progress because teachers have very high expectations and the work in the separate sciences provides

consistently high levels of challenge. However, some boys and girls in the middle ability sets in Years 10 and 11 are not motivated enough by the work and make insufficient progress.

127. Achievement is similar for boys and girls throughout Years 7 to 11. Students with SEN make good progress because the work is usually adjusted well to their needs. Most students have effective literacy and numeracy skills, and standards in written, mathematical and graph work are good.
128. The vast majority of students concentrate very well in lessons and work extremely hard. They are very keen to learn. However, a few students in each year demonstrate rather casual attitudes and are not very co-operative, despite the efforts of teachers to make the work interesting. Boys, in particular, drift off task easily and sometimes disturb the flow of lessons.
129. Teaching is good overall. There is some very good teaching and a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use well to explain scientific concepts. Lessons are planned well and contain a range of activities that interest and involve students. Good use is made of students' self-assessments, and questioning is effective in monitoring students' progress. As a result, students' learning is good throughout Years 7 to 11. Less successful and unsatisfactory lessons usually result from inexperienced teachers' lack of familiarity with the work. These lessons are not organised well and students become confused about what is expected of them. Occasionally, teachers lack consistency in managing students' behaviour and lessons lose their focus. Students are not able to develop their ICT skills sufficiently because of limited access to computer rooms during lessons and a lack of equipment in laboratories. This was also found in the last inspection. Technical support is highly effective in supporting teaching and learning. After-school science clubs provide valuable enrichment opportunities for students in Years 7 to 9.
130. Leadership and management are very effective. The head of department has a good awareness of successful practice in science education, which is being used very well to develop a shared vision for the future. Very effective monitoring and evaluation have produced appropriate development plans that have resulted in good improvement since the last inspection. The staff are very committed and there is now a good match of teachers to the curriculum. A greater emphasis is placed on improving teaching and learning. Accommodation is very good. However, the marking of students' work is still rather inconsistent.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is resulting in improving standards in Years 7 to 9, and Years 10 to 11.
- Students form good relationships with their teachers and have a positive attitude to their work.
- Statutory requirements are not met in Years 10 and 11. The cross-curricular provision of ICT gives incomplete coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study and students' achievement is not assessed against National Curriculum levels.
- There has not been sufficient progress since the previous inspection, particularly in the development of ICT-based work in different subject areas.

### Commentary



131. Students enter the school with varying experiences in using ICT but overall standards are in line with the national average. Teacher assessment in 2004 for Year 9 shows standards are well below average, although in lessons seen during the inspection, standards have improved significantly and are closer to the national average. The introduction of discrete ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9, with the focus on developing students' ICT capability, is having a positive impact on raising standards. It has provided continuity and enables a progressive range of activities to be undertaken which fully meet the National Curriculum requirements. Such activities include; word processing, using spreadsheets, modelling, multi-media presentations, computer-aided design, data logging and data handling. Students can also access the Internet and use it competently to research information. By the end of Year 9, in lessons seen, students' achievement is satisfactory.
132. Most students do not take an ICT course in Years 10 and 11. The coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study is not guaranteed and students' attainment is not assessed against National Curriculum levels. GCSE results in 2004 were below average. Disruptions in staffing, together with a lack of motivation, resulted in failure to complete coursework fully, leading to weaknesses in standards. By the end of Year 11, in GCSE lessons seen, standards have increased and broadly match the national average. This is because of good teaching, focusing specifically on examination requirements to increase marks and improve knowledge and understanding of the syllabus content. The achievement of both boys and girls is satisfactory.
133. Teaching and learning are good overall and this has led to improving standards from Year 7 to Year 11. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, teachers are covering the National Strategy programme, where all students have one lesson of ICT per week. The best teaching is planned in detail and organised to ensure students learn at a good pace, understand the purpose of each lesson, know how well they are doing and what they can do to improve. Most students enjoy the subject and welcome the practical approach to learning. Where teaching is less successful, students of lower ability find it more difficult to work independently and require more structure to support their learning. Some teachers have low expectations and don't challenge sufficiently, the most capable students. Support for students with SEN through the use of additional teaching materials is generally good. Students form good relationships with their teachers and have a positive attitude to their work.
134. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. Following a lengthy and unsettled period without a subject leader, the department has benefited greatly from the recent appointment of a new ICT co-ordinator, who has worked tirelessly in six months to overcome problems caused by previous staffing issues and begun to address the weaknesses highlighted in the last inspection. Staffing is now more stable and teachers are knowledgeable and focused on ensuring that the examination requirements are fully met by students. The co-ordinator has a clear vision for ICT in the school and recognition of what is needed to improve standards and how the subject can better relate to the needs of students. He is well supported by a team of hard-working teachers. Resources are just about adequate; ageing but reliable, and maintained well by the technical support team. Most of the specialist teaching rooms are cramped, and the layout of benching and computers makes the teaching of ICT difficult.
135. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Although the introduction of discrete lessons for ICT in Years 7 to 9 with specialist teachers has had a positive impact on improving provision, standards achieved in 2004 are still well below average, and the school's arrangements for the assessment, recording and reporting of students' progress are still underdeveloped. The new co-ordinator is working well to address the weaknesses identified, including leadership and management, and is improving the assessment of the work students do, but this work is at an early stage of development. Teaching is now much improved across

all years. Areas where improvement has been insufficient include attainment at the end of Year 9, which is still well below average. Statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 are still not met, but the provision in these years is better than at the last inspection.

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

136. The use of computers across the school in other subjects is unsatisfactory. There are several specialist rooms, but access to computers for most subjects, at the time when they are needed for particular lessons, is difficult. Subjects where ICT is being used effectively include design and technology, where students use 'Pro Desktop' to develop their CAD/CAM skills, and modern foreign languages, where students regularly prepare 'PowerPoint' presentations, prepare leaflets about holiday destinations and make very good use of the media centre. Both subjects have the use of dedicated computers and software in their departments. Good use of ICT also takes place in classes supporting students with SEN. Very little ICT is undertaken currently in English, history, RE and music.
137. There has not been sufficient progress since the previous inspection, particularly in the development of ICT-based work in different subject areas. Little investment has been put into equipping departments with their own interactive whiteboards or sets of laptop computers, which would significantly improve access and also support a range of different teaching and learning styles for students in lessons. Provision for ICT seems to be driven by a 'technical agenda' and does not necessarily meet the modern curriculum needs of departments. Several heads of department are frustrated that when they speak to the school about some of the new excellent multimedia software titles, which really could enhance learning in their subject area, they are too frequently told that these are incompatible with the school's established network system and as such should not be purchased. If the school is to move forward in this area, teaching and learning should be central to the decision-making process for shaping the school's ICT vision, determining the long-term investment programme and policy for selecting, purchasing, using and evaluating new learning technologies.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory** overall, because insufficient time is made available for all students in Years 10 and 11. The provision for students in Years 7 to 9, and for Year 10 and 11 students who study GCSE religious studies, is satisfactory.

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

- Good teaching has led to high standards and good achievement at GCSE.
- Effective day-to-day management ensures that teaching and learning are supported by appropriate resources.
- The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Only students who take the GCSE course receive an adequate experience of religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- The allocation of time for the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is well below that required in the Surrey agreed syllabus, and this impacts negatively on the delivery of the curriculum.

## Commentary

138. Standards are above average at GCSE. Girls and boys do better than their peers nationally. Girls, however, do better than boys. The most recent teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show girls doing better than boys and all students reaching expected levels. As most students begin religious education with average standards, their achievement from Year 7 to 9 is satisfactory and for the few going on to GCSE, it is good. Students with special needs do well in the subject with few at very low levels in Year 9 and all passing at GCSE. Higher attaining students do very well.
139. By the end of Year 9, students' written work and assessments indicate good knowledge of world faiths and a fair understanding of the impact of belief on cultural traditions. Most understand the link between symbolism and belief. Thinking skills are evident in discussions about abstract concepts such as faith and in the written work of higher attaining students. Social interaction is good in discussions. Most students take care with written work but time constraints in lessons limit opportunities for reflection and quality writing. Standards remain average and achievement overall is satisfactory. Most students show consideration for the needs of others. By the end of Year 11 the few students taking the GCSE course have more time for in-depth thinking about moral responsibility in relation to social inequalities and to explore the links between rituals and beliefs. Written work indicates an appreciation of alternative views. Most students can bring together their religious knowledge and understanding to produce good quality GCSE coursework. Lower attaining students acquire a sound knowledge base over time. Standards are above average and achievement is good.
140. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9. It is consistently good at GCSE. Detailed planning reflects good subject knowledge. However, some lessons in Years 7 to 9 suffer from content overload, and opportunities for reflection and good quality writing are lost when students are rushed through tasks. Teachers' thinking and explanations present challenge to higher attaining students, especially at GCSE, who follow their line of thought well, but some students become confused. However, instructions are precise and students do know exactly what to do and how to do it. Guidance for GCSE students is particularly good. Relationships are good, creating a positive and pleasant learning environment in most lessons. Assessment is well designed, allowing students to demonstrate what they know and can do in imaginative and creative ways. Marking is detailed but comments do not always inform students about improving their work.
141. The subject has an experienced, dedicated leader who encourages collaborative planning and decision-making as seen in the self-critical development plan. Day-to-day management is most efficient, ensuring a good range of religious artefacts and resources supports teaching and learning. There are no ICT resources within the department. Although there is no central database for tracking students' progress, meticulous records are kept in teachers' mark books. Monitoring overall is effective. The detail in schemes of work and the number of assessments is not compatible with the low time allocated in Year 7 to 9. Standards have improved at GCSE, and the same strengths identified at the last inspection persist. However, there has been a serious regression in provision by a reduction of time in Years 7 to 9 to well below that required for the locally agreed syllabus. The school is in breach of statutory requirements

because it no longer makes adequate provision for all students in Years 10 and 11. Improvement since the last inspection is therefore unsatisfactory.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are well above the national average and standards at the end of Year 9 are well above those expected for students' age.
- Achievement by both boys and girls accelerates through the school and is very good by the end of Year 11.
- Students respond enthusiastically to very good teaching in all year groups.
- There is very good leadership and teamwork in the department and a consistent focus on the raising of standards.
- ICT skills are not well developed in Years 7-9 and higher attaining students are not always given sufficiently challenging tasks.

### **Commentary**

142. The attainment of students on entry is above that expected for their age. Their achievement by the end of Year 9 is good and the teacher assessments show that both boys and girls well exceed the standards expected for their age, especially at the higher levels. This is confirmed by work seen in class. Students develop good map skills, use technical terms well and have a good understanding of the factors which influence the location of settlements. They are able to balance the positive and negative impact of tourism in both more and less economically developed countries.
143. In 2004, results in the GCSE examinations were well above the national average at grades A\*-C, a level of attainment which has been consistent for the past three years. A higher percentage of girls attain grades A\*-B. Results in geography are among the highest in the school and the standard of coursework based on the local region is particularly good, offering a real challenge to gifted and talented students. Standards of classwork seen in Years 10-11 are above those expected at this stage in the course. Students' achievement by the end of Year 11 is very good. They have a good understanding of the development of the rural-urban fringe and explain well the factors which cause flooding and the preventive measures which can be taken.
144. Boys achieve as well as girls in all years and both contribute enthusiastically to discussions and collaborate well in group work. The achievement of students with SEN is good since much work is well targeted on an individual basis. The achievement of higher attaining students is good but they are not always given sufficiently challenging extension tasks beyond their coursework.
145. Teaching is very good overall and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have high expectations and very good subject knowledge. They plan well-structured lessons with varied activities and resources. Lessons start in an orderly way, the pace throughout is brisk and challenging, but not enough time is sometimes left at the end to reflect on lesson objectives. Questioning techniques are particularly well directed to stimulate students' interest. The use of homework to extend learning is good and constructive oral feedback is frequently given to the whole class. Self and peer assessment are becoming well developed. Written comments tell

students in a general way what they have to do to improve but targets are not always challenging enough.

146. Students develop good literacy skills through the reinforcement of key words. There are many opportunities for discussion and a range of writing, but individual research opportunities are limited. Good teaching of numeracy skills results in the accurate use of a range of graphs and charts in all years. The programme of fieldwork and local studies is particularly well integrated into the schemes of work but there are not enough opportunities for the development of ICT skills in Years 7-9. The selection of worldwide case studies contributes well to students' cultural development and they reflect sensitively on the magnitude of natural hazards and man-made disasters.
147. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is strong teamwork among both experienced and newly qualified teachers and a highly professional and enthusiastic commitment to the raising of standards. The department is managed efficiently on a day-to-day basis and self-evaluation and monitoring are becoming more widely used to track performance. Schemes of work are not sufficiently explicit in indicating opportunities for key skills and citizenship development. Improvement since the last inspection is good, particularly in students' attitudes and behaviour and in the provision of targeted work for lower attaining students.

## **History**

Provision in history is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The GCSE results in 2004 were well above average.
- There is very good teaching and learning across all years.
- The very good behaviour and attitudes of students help their learning.
- Day-to-day marking lacks rigour.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance teaching or learning.

## **Commentary**

148. GCSE results in 2004 were well above average. Girls out-performed boys and two thirds of the girls achieved A\*- B grades. Standards seen in the inspection confirm well above average standards, with no difference in the current performance of boys and girls. This represents good achievement for students who are maintaining the well above average standards they achieve at the end of Year 9. Their understanding of causation, and their ability to write accurately and in detail about a range of events, are very good.
149. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are well above average. These well above average standards are confirmed by inspection evidence. Students by the end of Year 9 have very good historical knowledge, analyse change over time, and write convincingly and in detail using appropriate evidence about cause and effect. This represents good achievement for students whose historical knowledge and skills when they enter the school are above average although they have well above average literacy skills. They make good progress because of their very good attitudes and behaviour and because of the very structured work set by teachers which develops their extended writing skills, encourages the use of evidence to support opinions, and covers a wide range of topics.

150. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good. Teachers are well qualified, enthusiastic and well prepared, focusing upon examination requirements. Teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 are more varied but are never less than satisfactory and are generally good or very good, with one excellent lesson. Teachers use a variety of activities and excellent materials to stimulate students' imaginations and structure their historical thinking. In less successful lessons they try to cover too much ground.
151. Students' learning and understanding of historical concepts benefit from the breadth of topics covered in their course and the encouragement students are given to make connections between the different periods covered and across periods. In an excellent lesson in Year 8, for example, whilst hypothesising about the impact of The Declaration of the Rights of Man on the French Revolution, students related the ideas to those found in The Constitution of the United States. Students' learning, in all classes seen, is enhanced by very good behaviour and attitudes. They enjoy learning and work constructively, whether on their own or in groups. Teachers' day-to-day marking is not always sufficiently rigorous, however, to encourage good spelling and historical accuracy, but overall assessments are very good and enable students to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Insufficient use is made of ICT to enhance teaching or learning.
152. Leadership and management are very good. There is a commitment to continual improvement and the maintenance of high standards across a committed group of teachers. Teachers work very well together as an effective team improving schemes of work, planning lessons and producing classroom materials. New and non-specialists teachers are well supported. Teaching is evaluated and students' work is monitored to ensure consistency across the department.
153. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Teaching, planning and assessment have all improved and are helping ensure the consolidation of well above average standards.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Teachers are committed and knowledgeable; they plan effectively and use a range of teaching styles to enhance students' learning.
- Some teaching is of high quality.
- The legal requirement to carry out risk assessments of the tasks which students undertake is not fulfilled.
- Some coursework produced by students is of good quality.
- Current assessment methods in Years 7 to 9 do not accurately assess students' capability in the subject.
- In Years 7 to 9, day-to-day marking does not give sufficient guidance to students to enable them to improve their work.

#### **Commentary**

154. Results at GCSE and at the end of Year 9 have declined in recent years. However, at the end of Year 9 they are still in line with national averages. At the end of Year 11, results are close

to national averages and there are signs of improvement in standards by the current Year 11 students.

155. In Years 10 and 11, students develop good design skills and make a range of products accurately. In graphics, students show that they can use a wide range of graphic media to produce graphic products. In food technology, students make a range of trial products to a high standard before developing their own products. Effective use is made of ICT in coursework folders. At the end of Year 9, students can work successfully in a range of different materials on packing design in graphics, the design and making of ties in textiles, and the development of bread-based products in food technology. Students come into the school with very varied previous experience of the subject, some of which is quite limited; a scrutiny of early work in Year 7 shows that their attainment is average overall. Results at the end of Year 9 represent satisfactory progress. Achievement at the end of Year 11 is also satisfactory. Examples of good achievement occur in coursework in Years 10 and 11 in all material areas.
156. Teaching and learning are good overall, and some is very good. Teaching is generally better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7-9. Good teaching is characterised by very good use of targeted questioning to check students' knowledge and understanding and a brisk pace to lessons. This is particularly so in food technology where there is also good planning for work at different levels to suit the needs of all students. Teachers are well qualified and have very good subject knowledge. In a Year 9 food technology lesson, students gained a good understanding of the function of ingredients used for making bread through carefully structured practical work and skilled questioning by the teacher. Assessment follows the school policy but in Years 7-9 does not give an accurate picture of how well students are performing in the subject because of the small parts of each task which are actually assessed. Comments from day-to-day marking do not give sufficient guidance to students as to how their work might improve and there is a lack of standardisation of assessment by the various teachers in the department. Assessment is good, however, in Years 10 and 11 where helpful comments are given at regular intervals on progress with coursework. ICT is used effectively, especially in Years 10 and 11, but there is rather less use in Years 7-9. There are good opportunities for extra-curricular activities and these are helpful in extending students' experience.
157. Teachers and technicians work well together as a team and the planning of lessons and of units of work is good. Some effective work has recently been done to revise and update the activities used with Year 7 students. Although planning is good overall, greater emphasis needs to be given to the use of more open-ended designing and making tasks; to the use of a wider range of materials in resistant materials; and to systems and control. The recently appointed subject leader has taken appropriate steps to raise standards. Currently risk assessments of the work which students do, which are a legal requirement, are not in place. There is good technician support which is used well to support learning. Overall leadership and management are satisfactory.
158. At the time of last inspections, standards at GCSE and at the end of Year 9 were well above average. Since that time standards have declined, but are still average at the end of Year 9 and close to average in GCSE examinations. Standards of teaching have been maintained but students' progress is now only satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **ART AND DESIGN**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good and students learn well in lessons.
- The GCSE photography course is very well taught and managed.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes are very good.
- The wide range of experiences enjoyed by students.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good and teachers work well as a team.
- Students' work is very well monitored, evaluated and assessed.
- Provision for ICT in the studios is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

159. Standards in art and design are above national expectations by the end of Year 9. In the 2004 teacher assessments, 89 per cent of the students achieved Level 5 or above. In the lessons seen during the inspection, standards achieved by many students were good. In Years 10 and 11 at GCSE, students make significant progress and standards are very good. In 2004, 70 per cent of students obtained A\* to C, with both boys and girls achieving grades above the national average. Students with learning difficulties make good progress at all ages. Workbooks are very well used for both class and homework, with obvious progress being made from the start of Year 7 through to the end of Year 9. Both drawing and colour handling skills develop well as a result of good planning for learning that develops skills, processes and techniques systematically. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on printmaking, students used polystyrene to understand basic skills, and a Year 8 lesson by a different teacher used lino and working in the style of the Japanese artist Hokusai. As well as printmaking, students work with increasing confidence with clay, fabrics, photography, pencil and paint. A very good balance is achieved between large- and small-scale work, sculpture and fine art. In a very good lesson on landscapes in Year 9, students discussed illusion in scale after careful analysis of a painting by Magritte before moving on to linear and aerial perspective in their own work.
160. By the end of Year 9, students have used a wide range of techniques and processes and materials, although some observational drawing shows a lack of rigour. Because of a lack of computers in the studios, students have not had the opportunity to scan, manipulate and develop images using non-traditional approaches to art and design. They are, however, stimulated by looking at the works of a wide range of artists from cultural, historical and contemporary backgrounds. For example, Year 8 students used Aboriginal art as a starting point, developing very rich paintings using the limited colour and traditional animal images. The students' evaluations and annotations in their workbooks were impressive, as one student wrote, "I decided on reflection to add more detail to the snake in order to make it the focus of the painting". Department staff take every opportunity to reinforce the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Students are taught proportion and grids in Year 7 portraiture, and use different kinds of writing when describing pictures and evaluating their own work. Higher attaining students achieve very well because of the high expectations of the staff and the personalised learning that has been developed. In a Year 11 GCSE group, persuasive coaching by the class teacher encouraged students to make choices and decisions for themselves. By the end of Year 11, students have made very good progress, with both boys and girls achieving above average results.



### *Example of outstanding practice*

#### **Use of artificial lighting to produce dramatic effects in photography**

A group of fifteen Year 10 students led by the class teacher worked collaboratively in groups of three to represent character and dramatic effect using spot lighting. The students started by matching keywords to definitions, such as the rule of thirds, leading lines, main points of interest and camera viewpoint. The students prepared for the session by setting up backdrops and tripods, and experimented with lighting. The teacher stressed the importance of cropping, as demonstrated by a black and white portrait of Picasso, where the background became an integral part of the picture. Students worked as each other's models while a series of six photographs were taken to represent different moods. The studio was darkened and hand-held spots were used to enable lighting to be used to the best effect. Students recorded angry, evil, vulnerable, friendly, powerful and mysterious poses. Over the course of the lesson, skills were built upon by the expert tuition, guidance, support and enthusiasm of the class teacher, so that by the end of the session all students had produced high quality work. The students not only learnt a huge amount about dramatic effects using black and white film, but also had really enjoyed the work. Because of excellent teaching and very thorough preparation, the teacher instils in the students a real love of photography, with many of the group wishing to study the subject at A-level.

161. Teaching is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are always very well planned, and teachers have a very clear idea of what they want to teach and why. There is a consistent approach to planning, assessment, classroom and student management so no time is wasted in maintaining order. Lessons are prepared in such a way that discussions, demonstrations and coursework are very well integrated. Consequently, students know what to expect and use the studios in a very mature and responsible way. They use tools and materials with confidence and skill and their attitudes towards staff and the subject are excellent. Behaviour is exemplary. Teachers use praise and encouragement very well. A very good example was during a lesson on the use and understanding of watercolour technique. Because of good one-to-one teaching and support, a student managed to produce a good paint mix and a very good landscape wash. The department benefits from a part-time technician, who is an artist applying for a place on the Graduate Teacher Programme. Students' work is monitored regularly and assessment is very good. The department follows the school guidelines on feedback and marking and this works well as students are aware of expectations and know how to improve their work. This method of assessment is very effective as it influences curriculum development and is reflected in the day-to-day planning of lessons. Students of all ages enjoy very good support, for example, in individual help for Year 11 students in presenting and displaying their coursework for GCSE. The accommodation for art is very good, with purpose built studios, a darkroom and kiln room. The wide range of experiences that students enjoy is a strength of the department.
162. The leadership and management are very good. Although relatively new to the post, the head of department has a clear focus on raising standards. The department consists of enthusiastic teachers who work very well as a team, demonstrated by the consistent approach to planning, learning and teaching. Although there is still some way to go with resources for ICT, this has not prevented progress. The head of department leads by example and is open to any new initiatives that will improve the situation for the students. As a result, standards have

improved, higher attaining students are achieving better, and improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## **Drama**

Provision in drama is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good; it is well structured and teachers have clear expectations.
- Very good opportunities for students to evaluate their work are planned in to the teaching.
- Teachers in the department receive good support from the head of department.
- The analysis of examination results in 2004 was not sufficiently detailed.

### **Commentary**

163. In Years 7-9 standards of work are above average. Students enter the school with a wide range of abilities in drama so achievement by the end of Year 9 is good. In 2004, GCSE results for Year 11 were well below the national average, and students' achievement was unsatisfactory. This was against the trend of the previous three years when results had been very high when compared with the national average. The standard of written work and performance seen during the inspection is above average in Year 11 and well above average in Year 10. A number of students with SEN are well supported with programmes which enable them to access the GCSE course, and their achievement is good. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Although the number of boys on GCSE courses is very small, teachers plan accordingly and effectively integrate boys into groups. Achievement overall is good.
164. Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good and excellent teaching. Lessons and programmes are well-structured; teachers plan their lessons carefully with a series of warm-up activities which reinforce the main focus of the lesson, and stimulate students to engage with the lesson's objectives. Expectations of behaviour and standard of performance are made clear, and are reinforced by teachers as students work. Students respond very well to the structure and good organisation in their lessons. They enjoy drama, are well-motivated and work purposefully. Most prepare readily out of class for their drama lessons, and are willing to commit a considerable amount of time for rehearsal and performance.
165. Student self-evaluation and peer evaluation are very good. Students have regular opportunities to evaluate their own and others' work, and teachers develop good use of evaluative and critical terminology. There are good opportunities for paired and group discussion to support the evaluative process and generate ideas and build up the confidence of students. Linking assessment criteria to lesson objectives at the start of the lesson does not happen routinely, and so this does not inform performance and evaluation.
166. Leadership and management of the department are good. With the exception of GCSE in 2004, standards in public examinations have been consistently very high at GCSE and A-level under the head of department's leadership. She has led the team's response to last year's GCSE results, and the implemented actions are having an effect on raising current standards in Years 10 and 11. The leadership of the recent changes to the assessment system, introducing National Curriculum levels and the school assessment pro-forma, are contributing to the raising of standards. School data is well used to set targets for students, and good use is made of ICT to support this. Although analysis of examination results has taken place in departmental discussion, there has been no detailed analysis to inform planning. The head of department lacked support from senior management on this. There has been very good support given to the

department's newly qualified teacher and to the non-specialists who teach in the department. Complex staffing arrangements are well managed by the head of department. There is good documentation in the form of a departmental handbook, including policies and comprehensive schemes of work for all years.

167. There is a very good programme of extra-curricular activities to support the department's work, including an annual production and regular opportunities for theatre visits. The department is well resourced, but accommodation is unsatisfactory. More than half the teaching takes place in a non-specialist area, either the school hall, which is unavailable for some parts of the school year, or in a shabby mobile classroom which is cramped. Both these areas are also limited in the technical opportunities which are available.
168. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. There has been a trend of very high standards with the exception of GCSE results in 2004. The evidence from the inspection is that the trend is set to continue.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average by Year 9 and Year 11 and the achievement of students is good.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The quality of leadership and management is good.
- Resources and accommodation are poor.
- Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are poor.

### **Commentary**

169. In 2004, the results of teacher assessment showed that standards at the end of Year 9 were above national expectations. This is in line with the pattern in recent years. Attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is poor, but the achievement by the end of Year 9 shows that this is raised significantly, therefore confirming the considerable progress students make. Year 7 students distinguish different pitches aurally, and by using Kodaly hand signs. Year 9 students improvise their own 'blues' melodies over a given chord pattern, whilst showing considerable understanding of the nature of 'blues notes'. At the end of Year 11, standards are consistently above national expectations, with GCSE results significantly higher than those achieved nationally. Students identify with confidence and accuracy the essential characteristics of a ground bass and the differences between variations built above it.
170. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, with no significant difference between key stages. High expectations are held of students, with teachers showing high levels of specialist subject knowledge and musical performance; lessons generally have good pace and engage students. Lessons are well prepared and build on previous knowledge and experience, using good questioning techniques, differentiation and effective use of whiteboards to reinforce learning. Where teaching is less than good, lessons lack a clear focus, with poor pace, inappropriate teaching material and poor student control. In the marking of students' work there are insufficient written comments for students to develop their understanding, or to indicate how they might progress further.

171. Overall, the quality of learning is good. There is clear evidence of progress and achievement, resulting from challenging teaching and the acquisition of good specialist knowledge and skills. Students evaluate effectively each other's work, and concentrate on complex tasks. They respond especially well to live performance in lessons and relate aural responses to theoretical understanding. Where learning is less than good, concentration is weak, often as a result of poor planning or poor student control; poor accommodation inhibits learning, with students struggling to cope with noise pollution, especially when working with electronic keyboards and percussion instruments. There is no significant difference between key stages, although at the end of Year 11, girls acquire knowledge and skills faster than boys. Relationships, attitudes and behaviour are, overall, very good.
172. The quality of leadership and management is good. The head of department provides a clear artistic and educational ethos that focuses on the needs of students and their learning. A team of visiting tutors provides students who wish to extend their musical experiences with the opportunity to learn a variety of western musical instruments during school time; a charging policy operates, with no subsidy provided by the school. This team operates effectively. Written work often lacks focus or purpose. Although assessment is used to monitor students' progress, it is used less effectively in order to inform teaching.
173. Since the last inspection, some excellent teaching now takes place; provision for students with SEN has improved, with particular attention to differentiation in the curriculum, either by task or outcome; pace within most lessons has improved. However, a new school day has resulted in the abandonment of extra-curricular activities at lunchtime, so that high quality ensemble training can only take place after school, in conflict with other school activities or musical groups in the community. There have been no improvements to the poor accommodation, mentioned in the two previous inspection reports; this is now having a negative impact on students' learning since it is not possible to conduct effective paired or grouped practical work because of restraints of space and noise pollution. Resources are satisfactory, but there is no provision for ICT; the curriculum is therefore incomplete. Staffing problems have resulted in two Year 7 classes not being taught music: this has resulted in the statutory requirements for the subject at Key Stage 3 not being met.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### **Physical education**

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

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

- Good teaching with some very good features promotes good achievement.
- A very good climate for learning promotes very good attitudes in students and extremely high levels of engagement.
- Leadership and management are strong. A highly committed team works very hard to maintain high standards.
- The underdevelopment of ICT is restricting the learning environment for students following the GCSE and AS/A2 level courses.

### **Commentary**

174. Standards on entry to the school are variable. By Year 9, the vast majority of students are working in line with national expectations, with a significant number working above. This represents good achievement. They are applying skills with accuracy, precision and control whilst developing technical and tactical awareness. A small group of students in each year group lacks co-ordination and fitness in performing basic physical skills. Boys and girls attain equally. The accurate application of skill, and well-developed knowledge and understanding of sports, transfers in to Years 10 and 11. Standards in statutory physical education lessons are average, denoting satisfactory achievement. In GCSE lessons, standards are above average, reflecting good achievement. In 2004, 78 per cent of students gained an A\*-C grade, which is well in excess of the national average of 57 per cent. Boys gained a greater proportion of higher grades, reflecting their superior practical performance. A number of students go on to gain similar success on the AS/A2 Sports Studies course, where girls out-perform boys because of their propensity for theoretical knowledge and understanding. Predicted grades for 2005 for both courses, based on sound evidence, suggest that high standards will be maintained.
175. Throughout Years 7-11, students, including those with SEN, achieve well. Gifted and talented students achieve accordingly. This reflects a fully inclusive department. Students develop a good understanding of how different types of exercise can contribute to their fitness and health. Many students can perform and lead warm-ups and they develop a good understanding of anatomy and physiology.
176. The quality of teaching is good with some very good features. The department has established a very good climate for learning, promoting enjoyment and success for all students. Very good subject knowledge, high expectations and challenge, and very good engagement and encouragement of students underpin all teaching and learning. The department plans lessons well and adopts teaching styles appropriate to the students' levels of attainment. Challenging tasks are adapted to students' needs. Teachers are good role models and they have very good and mutually respectful relationships with students, creating a very positive learning ethos. This produces lessons of high productivity. Many students observe and analyse performance and are thus developing independent and enquiring minds. Students' awareness of national curriculum levels is underdeveloped, which is limiting their ability to take even more responsibility for their own learning. The underdevelopment of ICT is further restricting the learning environment, particularly in the analysis of skill for movement for GCSE and AS/A2 level students.
177. Assessment for learning is good. Procedures are thorough, reflecting learning objectives, and are used well to respond to individual need.

### *Example of outstanding practice*

#### **Students' self-evaluation booklets**

The use of students' self-evaluation booklets for all Key Stage 3 activities and the regular setting of homework is providing students with the ideal means for developing their knowledge and understanding of physical education and its importance to a healthy and well balanced life style. It helps to build well the foundations for GCSE work and assists all students to become effective learners.

178. Curriculum provision meets statutory requirements, although the time assigned for classes that have two single lessons, rather than one double lesson, falls well below the national recommendation. A very good programme of intra and extra sporting activities, including recreational activities for the sixth form, enhances the students' opportunities for participation in sport. A significant number of students go on to gain local, regional and international

honours. The department promotes students' spiritual development well by the recognition of achievement and the promotion of posts of responsibility.

179. Management and leadership of the department are very good. Teachers form a very committed team who are determined to maintain high standards. They have high aspirations for their students. A strong departmental identity through a self-evaluating approach ensures that past and present issues are successfully addressed. The department has made sound progress since the last inspection. It has the determination and capacity to raise standards further.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good leadership and management have established a clear vision and high expectations for the department.
- Good teaching and learning result in well above average attainment in GCSE examinations.
- Pair and group work are used to develop students' collaborative, decision-making and oral skills.
- ICT is used regularly to support and extend students' learning.
- Although much progress has been made, the use of statistically based target setting and monitoring to raise standards is not fully developed.

### **Commentary**

180. In the GCSE examinations in 2004 the proportion of students attaining grades A\* - C was significantly above the national average, as was the proportion gaining the highest grades A\*/A. A larger proportion of girls than boys gained A\* - C grades, but girls were outperformed by boys in respect of A\*/A grades. Overall these results represent good achievement.
181. Standards are currently above course expectations in Year 11 and achievement is satisfactory. The final quality of coursework, and how teachers and students use the revision period, will determine whether standards in the examination will rise again to the well above average level of recent years.
182. In a Year 10 lesson students demonstrated good understanding of issues relating to equality of opportunity in employment. In a Year 11 lesson students clearly understood the meaning and features of job, batch and mass production through their enthusiastic involvement in a practical group exercise constructing model cars.
183. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan, structure and pace their lessons very carefully. As a result students remain on task and learn systematically. Students are regularly involved in their own learning through a range of pair and group work activities, which develop their collaborative, decision-making and oral skills. During whole-class feedback and discussion, teachers effectively reinforce and develop key points through skilful questioning. Teachers target their questions well and pitch them to match their understanding of students' capabilities. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and place a strong emphasis

on students' understanding of technical terms. ICT is used on a regular basis to support and extend learning. Homework is well used to reinforce and extend classroom activities and encourage independent study. Students' work is regularly marked and commented upon by teachers. In line with school policy there are periodic, marked assessments which, alongside predicted grades, are used by teachers to monitor students' progress. This process could be developed further, particularly in respect of discussing outcomes and future actions with the students. There is a good range of extracurricular activities that enrich students' experience. These include the Lionheart Challenge, a Royal Bank of Scotland Enterprise Activity, a marketing investigation at Cadbury World and a human resources management study at Thorpe Park.

184. Good leadership and management of the department result in the high standards achieved in the GCSE examinations. The head of department has a strong vision and with her colleagues is constantly striving for improvement. Examination results are regularly evaluated. This is reflected in the department's detailed improvement plan which has a clear focus on students' learning. Schemes of work are periodically reviewed and updated. Departmental staff, including the highly valued administrative assistant, are clear about their roles. There is good teamwork and delegation of functions. The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

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

Personal, social and health education in Years 7-9 is taught on a day of the week that did not coincide with the inspection, and so it was not inspected. Students in Years 10 and 11 all follow a course in social education, which was sampled. This course includes four modules with religious studies content that together provide input of 20 hours over two years, and are taught by religious studies staff, but managed by the co-ordinator of personal and social education. The teaching was satisfactory or better in three lessons seen, and the content was interesting and thought-provoking, with students invited to consider ultimate questions about creation, the universe, belief, and ethical questions relating to differences in society. There was some good discussion during lessons, but students' written work was generally of a very low standard. Some students do not take the subject seriously, and are slow to settle to work, and waste time.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

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

- Citizenship is evident in the curriculum of the whole school.
- All subject areas make a good contribution to citizenship development and raise students' awareness of citizenship issues in subject content.
- Good leadership promotes citizenship education and is the driving force behind citizenship development.
- The time for discrete lessons in citizenship in Years 7-9 is insufficient to cover the syllabus in any depth and impacts negatively on standards of achievement.
- Assessment, although well organised, is inconsistent in practice and procedures are not consistently applied.
- The strands of provision are not monitored, and so there is inconsistency in practice.

## Commentary

185. The model of citizenship education chosen by the school is complex, with four strands of provision: whole-school, cross-curricular, discrete lessons in Years 7 to 9, and as part of social education in Years 10 and 11.
186. None of the discrete lessons in Years 7 to 9 coincided with the inspection, but the small amount of work included in students' portfolios is of a low standard, and does not show evidence of progress. Discussion in Years 10 and 11 social education reflects a satisfactory grasp of citizenship issues, good levels of participation and good communication skills. Both girls and boys participate well. Students with special needs often shine in discussions. Standards are average and achievement good. The standard of students' written work is considerably lower. Citizenship standards in subject areas have yet to be collated by the school, which has also not begun to gauge the standards achieved in whole-school activities.
187. An "effective 21st century citizen" is the school's aim for all students. School policies support responsible citizenship. Students are encouraged to undertake charity fund raising, learn about organisations such as UNICEF, understand the world as a global community, and participate in whole-school events such as international day. Active participation is encouraged in all forms of extra-curricular activities especially those providing a service to the school community such as the environment group, and to the wider community through participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. The school enables students to assume responsibility as year and school councillors, and enables older students to act as mentors to younger students. Citizenship in action is evident but as yet many students do not recognise this, as the link with citizenship is not explicit. Provision is not linked to the school's mission statement.
188. Subject areas make a good contribution to citizenship. Most subject leaders have identified citizenship opportunities in schemes of work and most ensure that at least one aspect of citizenship is assessed. A few subjects have yet to fully implement the plans described in the initial audit two years ago. Citizenship opportunities are included in teachers' planning, raising awareness of citizenship issues in lessons. Some subjects, for example, science, use the opportunity of citizenship assessment to explore different areas of science such as herbal medicine and related legislation. Assessment data is held in departments and not on a citizenship database. There is no monitoring of cross-curricular provision, a fact noted in the whole-school development plan for 2004, and not as yet acted upon.
189. Discrete citizenship lessons are provided for 20 minutes per week for students in Years 7 to 9. Workbooks are provided for each student, the content of which is interesting but text heavy. The workbooks are underused and few teachers provide attractive substitutes. The time allocation severely restricts the depth of learning, as seen in the small amount and poor quality of work done. The national curriculum requirement to develop skills of communication through written work is not met and there is little to show for three years' work by Year 9. Students' self-assessment highlights their likes and dislikes, rather than reflecting their knowledge and understanding of the topics studied. There is no written evidence to support the assessment levels that are given, and the degree of students' participation and communication is not assessed through peer and group evaluation. Assessment records in students' planners are not always completed by students or checked by teachers. Assessment data, especially self-assessment, is not analysed to establish standards or achievement or to inform future planning. Monitoring of provision in Years 7 to 9 is not effective, so allowing inconsistencies in practice. Weaknesses in delivery of the curriculum at this stage, identified in the 2004 subject and school improvement plan, have yet to be acted upon.



190. Discrete lessons in citizenship are provided in five modules in Years 10 and 11 within a carousel with health, social and careers modules. This is insufficient for the delivery of the curriculum and continuity is lost through the carousel arrangement. However, the teaching is more effective, and teachers apply good subject knowledge in their planning. Activities are designed to stimulate interest and to get students working together. Students begin to think well especially about the impact of the media on public opinion and about rights and responsibilities. Not all students behave responsibly in lessons limiting meaningful discussion through idle chatter. Little record is made of learning, and again the requirement to communicate through writing is not met. Students' knowledge, understanding and skills are not evaluated rigorously against attainment targets and skills. Self-assessment is again not analysed to inform planning nor is it used to inform students of their improvement.
191. Leadership is a strength of the provision, and the subject leader is the driving force behind the development of the subject. She has worked hard to promote the subject, with particular success in subject areas and in whole-school initiatives. Planning is advanced, especially in assessment procedures, and a review of provision has taken place. Management is less efficient. Inconsistencies occur in all areas of provision, particularly in the discrete provision in Years 7 to 9, as noted in the development plan. Monitoring is totally inadequate across all areas of provision. Assessment is unsubstantiated and procedures are too complicated. Assessment is not used to inform planning, to inform students about improvement, or to establish standards and achievement. The books that are available are inadequate. The use of ICT is rare and opportunities depend on where students happen to be taught. Time, especially in Years 7 to 9, is totally inadequate. None of these weaknesses is identified in either the subject improvement plan or in the school development plan.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 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	10	90.0	78.3	10.0	21.6	34.0	28.5
Biology	17	76.5	63.5	5.9	10.4	20.6	19.8
Business studies	6	50.0	75.3	0	15.4	11.7	25.7
Chemistry	8	62.5	70.3	12.5	13.2	20.0	23.0
Communication studies	14	78.6	87.2	0	24.9	21.4	32.8
Drama	3	100	86.6	66.7	19.8	46.7	30.9
Economics	2	100	71.6	100	18.6	55.0	25.8
English/English language	16	100	85.3	18.8	16.1	35.6	29.0
English literature	7	100	86.2	42.9	17.4	41.4	29.7
French	5	100	79.8	80.0	19.4	54.0	28.2
Design and technology	6	33.3	72.6	16.7	13.9	13.3	24.3
General studies	7	85.7	73.6	42.9	16.9	35.7	25.5
Geography	9	77.8	75.5	22.2	20.4	25.6	27.0
German	4	100	81.6	50.0	18.8	42.5	28.8
History	6	83.3	82.2	33.3	20.8	28.3	29.2
Information technology	17	29.4	66.6	20.8	8.8	7.1	20.6
Mathematics	28	57.1	59.9	17.9	14.1	18.2	20.5
Music	3	100	79.8	0	16.9	33.3	27.5
Other social studies	25	44.0	82.5	4.0	15.1	12.0	23.2
Physics	4	75.0	67.8	0	14.8	22.5	22.4
Religious studies	3	33.3	66.4	0	26.1	6.7	31.2
Sociology	2	100	82.2	0	19.6	35.0	25.9
Spanish	1	100	72.1	0	17.0	20.0	26.5
Sports/PE studies	7	71.4	72.2	0	11.8	15.7	22.8

*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	25	100	98.3	52.0	50.2	90.4	87.1
Biology	18	100	96.6	55.6	40.0	90.0	79.3
Business studies	20	100	98.9	40.0	39.4	84.0	81.8
Chemistry	18	100	97.7	50.0	50.0	86.7	85.7
Communication studies	22	100	99.2	18.2	40.4	76.4	83.6
Drama	5	100	99.6	80.0	42.8	96.0	85.1
Economics	2	100	98.8	100	54.3	110.0	89.8
English/English language	15	100	99.2	40.0	36.4	82.7	81.1
English literature	12	100	99.4	33.3	44.9	81.7	85.5
French	1	100	99.0	100	53.1	120	88.9
Geography	16	100	98.8	56.3	46.4	93.8	85.2
German	6	100	98.6	66.7	49.6	96.7	86.3
History	11	100	99.0	54.5	45.6	90.9	85.1
Information technology	5	100	96.3	20.0	25.7	76.0	71.1
Mathematics	39	96.6	96.8	62.1	56.6	93.8	89.5
Music	4	100	98.2	0	37.1	80.0	79.5
Other languages	1	100	97.3	100	66.7	120.0	95.6
Other social studies	18	88.9	97.4	16.7	42.5	62.2	81.6
Physics	13	100	96.7	53.8	45.3	89.2	82.6
Religious studies	3	100	99.1	0	49.5	66.7	87.4
Sociology	2	100	98.5	50.0	45.3	90.0	84.6
Spanish	5	100	98.2	20.0	53.5	60.0	88.7
Sports/PE studies	6	100	97.8	16.7	30.9	73.3	75.4
Information technology VQ	2	50.0	88.3	0	26.9	20.0	67.8

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

During the inspection, English and German were inspected in depth. Work in A-level French and Spanish, and a community course in Japanese, was sampled.

### English

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The offered curriculum is broad, catering for students with a range of abilities.
- Standards are good overall in relation to students' prior attainment.
- The quality of teaching, and of relationships, is high, especially in literature teaching.
- The department has sensibly introduced some of the teaching methods found successful in the main school.

- In some lessons there are too few opportunities for students to show initiative and take responsibility.
- Attendance at lessons is erratic, for example, in Year 12.
- There is some overlap of course content where students are taking more than one of the courses offered, and no concerted strategy as to how best to develop students' skills.

## Commentary

192. Students follow one or more of the following four courses as AS and A2 levels: English language, English literature, communication studies, and media studies. The size of the teaching group varies widely, from 16 students in the current Year 12 communication studies to only five in Year 13 English literature.
193. Results in 2004 in AS English language and English literature were well above the national average by students of both genders, on average point scores, with the numbers of A and B grades being in line with the national average. At A2 in these courses the results were above the national average in language but below average in literature. Female students did substantially better than male students, but cohorts were small. The spread of grades was wide, with four out of 15 gaining D or E in language and two out of 12 in literature.
194. In communication studies at AS and A2 the results were below national averages on average point scores; also with a 'tail' of grades, perhaps reflecting the lower prior attainment of the intake. Pass and completion rates are, however, satisfactory and in line with or better than those of other subjects in the school. Media studies was newly offered and the first group took AS in 2004. The grades exceeded individual predictions but also showed a wide spread, from B to E. These results would merit further analysis by the department.
195. Standards attained in lessons and workbooks vary from above to below average for the age group: they were good overall in relation to prior attainment, especially in some of the coursework assignments. Females tended to be more assiduous, as also indicated by past results. Speaking and reading aloud are less confident in general than is usually expected at this level. The quality of response to reading varied from excellent to below average: it was good overall in the language and literature courses. Students acquire new technical vocabulary in media and communication studies, but are not always learning how to read or appraise critically and with discrimination. Written work showed interest and sometimes enthusiasm but was marred by shortcomings in spelling, expression, and the organisation of ideas.
196. The teaching is of good quality and at best it is well adapted to students' needs, especially where opportunity is given for the development of skills recognized as being insecure. As at the earlier key stages, continuous assessment, feedback, and encouragement to take responsibility in lessons are not consistent enough. There are, however, examples of effective practice in the teaching which enable good progress to be made in lessons and over time. Where well-handled discussion occurred, students' ideas were extended and they did not remain over-dependent on the teacher. The double lessons sometimes went at a leisurely pace in terms of what was learned and achieved.
197. Management of the sixth form is good and, as in the main school, the curriculum and lessons are well planned. Teachers new to the school, including those newly qualified, make a worthwhile contribution. Financial considerations have led to a review of the number and range of the courses offered. Whether or not all four can be maintained, a strategy would be of value which aimed to identify the skills required and developed by each course, with the aim of enhancing progression and cross-fertilization between them.

## **German**

Provision in German is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In 2003 and 2004, A-level results were above or well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good ; it extends students' thinking as well as their language skills.
- Students' listening and understanding skills are very good because lessons are conducted virtually entirely in German.
- Students benefit significantly from study visits and work experience in Germany.

### **Commentary**

198. Students enter Year 12 with GCSE grades ranging from A\* to C. In the past two years A and AS examination results have been very good. High proportions gained high grades and average point scores were above or well above national averages. Small numbers make gender comparisons unreliable. Retention on courses is very good.
199. Students' current standards in both Years 12 and 13 vary from high to below average and are broadly average overall at this stage, half way through the year. Girls outnumber boys. The teachers' very high expectations and consistent use of German result in demanding work which extends students' vocabulary and results in good understanding. Students' accents are mainly good and all are confident to speak from memory, but the degree of accuracy varies from good to below average.
200. Achievement is good. Students have made significant gains in vocabulary and use of complex structures and in their confidence to manipulate language. They discuss in German their selected literary text and topics, and draw well on their reading when discussing topics, such as living under a communist regime, which would challenge them in English. Students are enthusiastic and have good attitudes to work. Several plan to continue German at university.
201. Teaching is very good. The teachers are strong linguists, and adapt their language well and make difficult texts accessible. They select a good variety of challenging material and exploit and consolidate it well. Work is carefully corrected with helpful comment, but only major pieces show how students have done in the different language aspects assessed in the final examinations. Some students would welcome more information.
202. Management is good. Numbers fluctuate across years; currently there are 12 in Year 13, and 3 in Year 12. Resources are good. The department works hard at sustaining many opportunities for extended study visits and work experience, as well as pleasurable ski trips, all of which are of great benefit to students' confidence and understanding. Sixth form German was not observed in the last inspection as students and teachers were in Germany.

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

Standards of literacy across the curriculum are good.

203. The four students present in a Japanese lesson have made significant progress and achieved well in a weekly after-school community class. They speak and read short sentences and write and understand a number of Japanese *kanjis*. Teaching by a native speaker was good. One student has been accepted to read Japanese at university.
204. A-level results in Spanish were well below the national average in 2004 and AS results in 2003 were in line with that average. Only one student sat the AS examination in 2004 so that comparisons are not appropriate. In the observed Year 13 lesson, spoken Spanish varied from quite fluent to hesitant but most students struggled to abstract information from several Spanish news clips, so that standards were below average, and below those in written work seen. Teaching was satisfactory; students would have benefited from better preparation of the task and concentrating on fewer news clips.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- The relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Students' attitudes towards learning and their achievement are very good.
- The provision for non-A level students is limited.

### **Commentary**

205. The GCE A-level results in 2004 and 2003 were above the national average. In 2004, girls performed better than boys, particularly at the higher grades, but in 2003 boys did better. GCE results at AS level were in line with the national average in both years. Standards are very high in both advanced level mathematics and further mathematics.
206. The standards in the GCSE modular group are below average, reflecting the attainment of the students at GCSE at the end of Year 11. Teaching and learning are good and the achievement of students at this level is satisfactory.
207. At advanced level, teaching and learning are very good. Teachers plan their lessons well and their subject knowledge is very good. They use very skilled questioning and explanations to guide students through challenging mathematical processes and engage them in high-level mathematical discussion and thinking. Students work co-operatively and relationships in the classroom are very good. Students have become very confident learners who work supportively together, enjoy their lessons and have a very positive attitude to the subject. Their work is well organised and presented, clearly demonstrating their understanding and providing a good basis for future revision. As a result, students achieve very well. Teachers provide a fine role model as mathematicians that encourages students' spiritual and aesthetic development so that, at times, students are excited by the intrinsic beauty of mathematics.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

Excellent teaching and learning in a Year 13 pure mathematics lesson.
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The lesson began with a lively discussion of the merits of different methods of solving equations involving partial fractions, which the students had been doing for homework. The students made sure that they fully understood the teacher's, and each other's, explanations so that they quickly spotted, and corrected, any errors that they had made. The teacher then introduced a more difficult equation and, again, all students were fully engaged in debating and trying alternative approaches to find a solution. The teacher's expert questioning and guidance enabled the students to progress so quickly that they became intrigued as they moved towards the solution of this very complex equation. One girl declared "Ooo, I can see something beautiful is about to happen." As the equation was solved, the others agreed that it had.

208. The leadership and management of the department are good. The work scheme is closely linked to subject specifications, and students' work is regularly marked and assessed. Clear routines are in place to ensure that students are well prepared for their examinations.
209. Advanced level curriculum provision is good and higher attaining students have access to both mathematics and further mathematics at A and AS level. The provision for lower attaining students is less good. There is currently no post-16 course available for students gaining a grade C at GCSE. The modular "re-sit" course available to students wishing to improve their GCSE grade is timetabled in such a way that the majority cannot attend all of the lessons and the rate of completion of this course is low.
210. Although some lessons are timetabled outside the department, accommodation and resources are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

211. Students' skills in mathematics are good and enable them to apply numerical and other techniques in a variety of situations across the school. Students apply their understanding of mathematics with confidence.

## **SCIENCE**

During the inspection, chemistry was inspected in depth. Work in biology and physics was sampled. In the one lesson of biology seen, Year 13 students made good gains in their understanding of how genetic crosses affect inheritance. Teaching was knowledgeable and the work was structured well. Standards were above the national average. Students achieved well because they were working very hard and consolidating their knowledge effectively. In the one lesson of physics seen, Year 12 students were learning about the gas laws. Teaching was very well planned and ensured that students developed their knowledge and understanding very effectively. Achievement was good because students were increasing their confidence and expertise in dealing more precisely with physical concepts. Standards were above the national average.

### **Chemistry**

The provision in chemistry is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use well to develop students' understanding of concepts.
- Teaching is good and ensures that students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment levels.
- Students have very mature attitudes and work extremely hard.
- Work in the subject is co-ordinated well.
- The opportunities for students to use ICT in laboratory situations are very limited.

## Commentary

212. Standards in the A-level examinations in both 2003 and 2004 were above national averages. In 2004, all students gained at least grade E and half gained grades A or B. The attainment of boys and girls was similar. Most students achieved or exceeded their target grades and many did better in chemistry than in their other subjects.
213. Students' prior attainment in GCSE science examinations is above average. They enjoy the work and appreciate the considerable help and guidance they receive from teachers. The numbers taking A-level chemistry have declined from 18 in 2003, to ten and nine respectively in the current Years 12 and 13. The numbers of girls and boys are similar in both year groups. Retention rates are very high, with nearly all students completing the two-year A-level course.
214. From work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 12 and 13 are above the national average. Students in Year 12 have a good knowledge of chemical concepts and are building well on previous GCSE work. However, some of them lack confidence in describing fundamental ideas and require more detailed recall of specific aspects such as bonding. Students in Year 13 have good understanding of chemical theories. A few have a very wide knowledge of the subject. Most students demonstrate high levels of competence in research techniques and are able to source and use information effectively. They have good investigational skills. Achievement is good in both Years 12 and 13 because students make good advances in their understanding and use of chemical principles. They respond well to teachers' high expectations.
215. Students in Year 12 work very productively. They concentrate well and show considerable interest. Students in Year 13 have very mature attitudes to their learning and demonstrate considerable initiative when working on their own.
216. Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. Teachers are highly qualified and experienced and have very good subject knowledge. The work in lessons is structured effectively and concepts are explained and reinforced well. Students' progress is assessed regularly, which results in the work being adjusted well to individual needs. The Salters' chemistry course used by the department, is effective in developing students' interest and commitment. Teachers' good understanding of the course requirements ensures that students are given good advice on how to improve. As a result, students' learning is good in both Years 12 and 13. Because there are insufficient computer facilities in laboratories, the opportunities for students to use ICT in scientific applications are very restricted.
217. Leadership and management are good. Work in the subject is well co-ordinated. The three teachers involved work well together as a team and share and evaluate classroom practice effectively. The subject leader is well aware of weaknesses in provision and has a clear view of aspects needing improvement. The many strengths identified in the last inspection report have been sustained and built upon successfully.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The school offers GNVQ Intermediate, AS and A2 courses.

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses



- Teaching ranged from excellent to satisfactory but is very good overall.
- The coursework seen was of good quality, and in line with syllabus requirements.
- Teaching focused on raising students' attainment by addressing the syllabus requirements; developing students' coursework and developing students' technical writing skills in order to maximise their marks.
- There is effective analysis of results by some teachers, with informed and well-thought out strategies for seeking further improvement.
- Students know how well they are doing, but they are also clear about what they need to do to improve their system design further, and maximise the number of marks that they gain.
- Few students gain Grade A or B at A-level.
- Results at AS are poor.
- There is sporadic attendance in some Year 12 classes.

## Commentary

218. A2 results were just above average in 2004. AS and GNVQ results were below average. This was because of staffing issues, and because students started the course without having taken an accredited ICT course in Years 10 and 11.
219. The quality of students' work reflects their sound understanding of the syllabus content and how their coursework assignments can be applied to the world of work and real-life situations. In Year 13, students learn the principles of relational databases and use MS Access and its macro facilities, to design and develop their own database program. Activities develop well in lessons and offer good progression and continuity in learning. Students' achievement is satisfactory.
220. Teachers have good subject expertise and provide appropriate challenge when setting tasks and asking questions. Lessons are planned in detail with specific learning objectives linked to the assessment criteria so that students know what they have to do, know how well they are performing and what they can do to improve further. Lessons are presented in an articulate and sometimes innovative manner, which is received well by students. Lessons help to focus students' thinking and sustain motivation during extended coursework assignments. Individual work is well monitored and supported.
221. The positive attitude and commitment to learning of the majority of students contribute to their achievement. They show interest and effort in lessons and work independently to research and complete their project work. They generally make effective use of homework and take advantage of the school's resources to use computers outside lesson time to improve the quality of their work. Students were very positive about their coursework and valued their teachers. One student indicated that he really enjoyed the innovative and lively multimedia presentations developed by one teacher, who managed to make theory lessons about 'conditional formatting' and 'using IF statements' in spreadsheets really exciting and entertaining. The relatively low level of student attendance in the GNVQ lessons seen is a cause for concern.
222. Work in this subject is organised effectively. The teachers who share classes work well together when planning and organising their lessons and ensure that each are kept fully up to date with students' progress. Good attention is given to the requirements of the examination syllabuses to secure higher marks. Good use is made of assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods and different methods are being tried out in order to raise standards further.

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

223. There is no formal programme of key skills in ICT. Most students have computers at home and possess the necessary basic skills for word processing, desk top publishing, setting up simple spreadsheets and using the Internet for researching information. There are some good opportunities made for using ICT in art and design and modern foreign languages. Effective use is made of graphical calculators in mathematics. Data loggers are used in science, although the opportunity to further analyse the data on computer is often missed due to limited access. Many of the other subjects rely on their students using ICT and accessing the Internet at home or in the learning resource centre, to assist in the development and presentation of their coursework.

## **HUMANITIES**

During the inspection, geography was inspected in depth. In addition, a lesson of history was sampled. The students had a very good understanding of economic concepts and terminology, and this helped them in developing their understanding of Hitler's economic policies.

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCE Advanced level results in 2004 were well above the national average and maintained the level of attainment of previous years.
- Students achieve well and respond conscientiously to teaching which is good overall and to very good preparation for coursework and in examination techniques.
- There is very good leadership and teamwork in the department and a consistent focus on the raising of standards.
- Students do not always demonstrate sufficient initiative and independence in their learning.

### **Commentary**

224. The attainment of students on entry to the sixth form is well above the national average. There is one option group in each of Years 12 and 13 and the retention rate between these two years is good. A-level results were well above the national average in 2004, maintaining the standards of the previous year, with boys marginally outperforming girls in relation to national figures by gender. Almost all met or exceeded their predicted target grades. AS level results in 2004 were broadly in line with the national average, but on the basis of a small entry.

225. These standards are confirmed by work seen in students' files, and achievement by the end of Year 13 is good. The contribution made by coursework is particularly good, allowing students to demonstrate their skills in both the collection and analysis of data and its presentation through an appropriate range of statistical techniques. ICT skills at this level are well developed. In class, they demonstrate a good understanding of the impact of urban and rural development projects in less economically developed countries as well as clarity about the changing global economy and the threat to biospheres. In their files, the carefully chosen range of modern case studies allows them to adopt a synoptic approach to environmental issues and challenges. Students write with conviction in response to practice examination questions and use evidence well to support their arguments.

226. Teaching is very good overall, as reflected in the quality of students' written work, and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have a clear enthusiasm for the subject, high expectations and very good subject knowledge. They challenge students well in their accurate use of advanced technical vocabulary and emphasise the need for evaluation as well as description and explanation. Most lessons rely substantially on questioning techniques which are sharply focused. Some students are either reticent or lack the confidence, particularly in small groups, to participate actively in discussion and to take the initiative to challenge each other or their teachers. As a result, some lessons are teacher dominated.
227. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The different modules of the subject are well co-ordinated and there is a strong commitment to the maintenance of very high standards. The department is managed efficiently on a day-to-day basis and preparation for examinations is very thorough. There were no major issues for improvement at the time of the last inspection.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

During the inspection, design and technology (product design) was inspected in depth, and an art-endorsed graphics course that is also taught by the design and technology department was sampled. A graphics lesson was taught effectively: students displayed a wide range of graphic skills, and used them effectively when developing imaginative ideas for graphic products. Collaboration was good, and standards of work were high.

### **Design and technology (product design)**

Provision in design and technology (product design) is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers are highly experienced, and have a very wide subject knowledge which is used effectively to enhance students' learning.
- The attitudes of students are very positive and this helps to create a positive learning ethos in all lessons.
- Students develop very good graphic skills which enable them to produce a wide range of design ideas.
- Few higher ability students take design and technology; overall examination results are restricted as a result.

### **Commentary**

228. Students in Year 12 are developing good design and research skills and are making good progress with coursework. Currently there is only one Year 13 student who is making good progress. In 2004 only two students were entered for the A-level examination; one of these gained a grade A and the other was ungraded. Few higher ability students take the subject. In consequence few higher grades are obtained.

229. The progress which students have made since the start of Year 12 has been good, and the students are rapidly developing a mature approach to designing. The Year 12 students have produced some interesting design ideas based on the Memphis and Bauhaus schools of designing and in doing so have gained a good understanding of two important influences on design in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Year 13 student is making good progress overall. Achievement is good.
230. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although there are also examples of good teaching. Teachers frequently work in the role of a facilitator of learning, encouraging and supporting students to work independently on design tasks. This is very effective and helps students to develop as independent learners. Teachers also draw on their very considerable knowledge of the subject and of work done by past students to enhance students' learning. There is regular oral feedback on progress and detailed assessment of design tasks, which helps students to understand how well they are progressing. Students enjoy the work and speak positively about the course, which meets their needs well.
231. Design and technology in the sixth form is managed by the head of the subject. Appropriate steps have been taken to produce a proper scheme of work and to work towards raising standards. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
232. The last report contained few comments relating to sixth form courses. Standards then were high; now they are below average, but the numbers are low so that statistical comparisons are of little value. Teaching is now only satisfactory, whereas at the time of the last inspection it was good. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

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

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Standards are above the national average and as a result of good teaching continue to improve.
- Because of the excellent attitude of the students, progress is very good.
- The course is very well planned and managed, with challenging activities designed to develop independent learning.
- Students' personal studies and folder work is monitored, evaluated and assessed very well.
- The use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

233. Standards in art and design are above average and improving. This is because of the good teaching and excellent attitude of the students. During the course, some students have improved significantly whilst others have maintained high standards over time. For example, one student, working to a very high standard on texture in portraits, produced some outstanding work that challenged the concept of conventional portraiture. As a direct result of the systematic development of craft skills and artistic techniques, the best results are in Year 13. Achievement is very good in Year 12. Students work hard and learn to experiment with ideas and materials. For example, one student was experimenting with broken glazed ceramics to produce a range of individual images.
234. Teachers show extensive knowledge of artists and their work. They know how to use artists' work and generate ideas, for example, in the use of Dada and surrealist concepts to work in a wide range of materials. Students work with flair and imagination and talk about their work well, with enthusiasm, interest and fluency. As a result of challenging teaching combined with the attitudes of the students towards the subject, their work shows a high degree of originality. They show a thorough understanding of what they are doing and why. Students produce a wealth of preparation for their projects and as a result of tutorial style interviews in which there is a very sophisticated exchange of ideas, students reach informed decisions. As a result of this quality dialogue, students make very good progress.
235. Teaching is good, lessons are well planned and classroom management is very effective. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent. The quality of teaching leads to the very good achievement of students, for it is always focused on their learning needs. Assessment is very good and individual targets are set. Students' progress is monitored well and this is reflected in the curriculum, project and lesson planning. The use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool is at present underdeveloped. Students use computers for research but because of the lack of any interactive resources, whole-group demonstrations and presentation are not possible. There is also the need for the professional development of staff on the application of software. Students use the art and design facilities very well, often beyond the end of the normal school day, and have their own working area within the department.
236. The department is very well led and managed. Students benefit from enthusiastic and highly committed teachers who work very well together. The leadership provides a very good role model for high standards in teaching. A very good team spirit exists. Everyone's opinions are sought and valued, contributing very effectively to the management and improvement of the department.

## **Photography**

Provision in photography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good and at times excellent.
- Students achieve very good standards and sometimes produce outstanding work.
- Students' work is assessed, evaluated and monitored very well.
- Relationships between staff and students are excellent.
- The course is very well planned and managed.
- Increased use needs to be made of industry-standard ICT and software.

## Commentary

237. Overall, on work seen during the inspection, standards are very good. In Year 13, standards are well above average, and the quality and variety of work produced by photography were of a professional quality, with some outstanding practice. In Years 12 and 13, students are achieving very well in relation to their respective starting points. Students use their skills of research to great effect in their planning and preparation, and develop their work methodically. They have a very good understanding of composition, cropping, contrast and mood and are inspired by the work of prominent photographers. Students' evaluative skills are well developed and they respond well when they are challenged to explain why design decisions have been made. The attitude of the students to the subject is excellent and this, linked to enthusiastic and expert teaching, ensures that the work produced is of a very high standard.
238. Teaching is very good. It demands much of students because it is challenging and expectations are very high. Assignment briefs are very well prepared with clear aims, objectives and well-defined assessment criteria. For example, in Year 12, students worked on projects including 'Rhythms of the human form' and 'Men act, and women appear – Men look at women – women watch themselves being looked at'. This quotation from John Berger in 1972 presented students with the challenge of how to represent women and consider how attitudes have changed in the last thirty years. Lessons also focus appropriately on the development and improvement of technical skills. As a result, students make very good progress both in the darkroom and when working in the studio on film planning. The teacher's subject knowledge is excellent. This ensures that difficult skills and processes are explained very well and, as a result, students learn quickly and understand well what is required of them. The wide range of resources, including digital imaging, maintains students' interest and helps them to learn. The students work well independently and as a group. They explore alternative ways of working and are unafraid to share ideas. For example, a Year 13 student looking at the role of photomontage in propaganda produced a very impressive portfolio based on the American armaments industry and computer software operating systems. The moral and social debate was examined in a range of very professional and striking images. Teaching is never prescriptive and as consequence learning is clearly focused on the needs of the student. The teacher monitors students' work thoroughly with excellent one-to-one feedback and support.
239. The subject is very well led and managed. There is a clear commitment to raising standards further by well-planned developments; for example, in working with local photographers. It now remains for the subject to develop further opportunities for students to work with industry-standard computers and software.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

### Football coaching

Provision in the NVQ Football Coaching Award is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent rapport between the tutor and the students brings about high levels of achievement.
- The very well structured course offers opportunities for all students to succeed.
- Success from the course offers pathways to full and part-time employment in all areas of sport.

- There are no weaknesses. A non-classroom environment would enhance the delivery of the theoretical components of the course.

### **Commentary**

240. The Level 2 award in coaching studies organised by 1<sup>st</sup> 4 Sport is a vocational qualification recognised by the Football Association (FA). The programme of work devised especially for the school is externally assessed through a portfolio of evidence underpinning practical coaching ability. The course, which is exceptionally well delivered by a fully qualified coach generically trained by the FA, and trained to work in schools, offers students a unique opportunity to enhance their football and coaching skills. Successful students may gain full and part-time employment coaching football, or applying their knowledge and work-based skills to all aspects of sport at home and abroad.
241. All students have gained a Level 1 accreditation and predicted grades based on sound evidence suggest that all students are capable of achieving the Level 2 qualification provided that their attendance remains high.
242. Sessions, which are very well structured, give students very clear detail and direction in the art of coaching all aspects of football. Students also learn the generic skills relating to any form of coaching. The coach has very good and mutually respectful relationships with the boys, producing sessions which are very productive, pacy and thoroughly enjoyable.
243. All boys in attendance show very positive attitudes and are very keen to learn and progress and take full advantage of the future employment pathways that successful completion of the course can offer.
244. Leadership and management of the programme are very good. The coach is highly committed and has the vision to progress the course to the advantage of many more young people.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching and learning and the very positive attitudes of students result in above average A level attainment.
- Students learn very effectively through enthusiastic engagement in paired and group work activities.
- Teachers are committed to raising standards, and their assessment of students' work is regular and thorough.
- There is limited enrichment of students' learning through business links and other extra-curricular activities.

### **Commentary**

245. In 2004 the A-level results were above the national average. All students gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining the highest grades of A and B was in line with the national average.

Achievement was variable. That of the small number of girls was good, whilst that of boys ranged from very good to unsatisfactory.

246. In 2004 the AS examination results were well above the national average. The achievement of girls was satisfactory. That of most of the boys ranged from very good to satisfactory, although for a small number it was poor.
247. Currently in Year 13, standards are above course expectations and achievement is good.
248. In a Year 12 lesson students showed good insight into the key external factors that influence a business, including the business cycle, interest rates and inflation. In a Year 13 lesson students developed skills of analysis and evaluation in exploring whether companies should consider and act upon ethical issues.
249. Teachers' very good subject knowledge, thorough lesson planning and skilful support and questioning ensure that all students progress at a challenging pace. Students learn very effectively through their enthusiastic engagement in a range of pair and group work activities. These are related to a variety of stimulus materials including teacher exposition, reading, video clips and newspaper articles. Due emphasis is given to subject-related vocabulary. Students keep well-organised files that contain a variety of information in written and graphical form. There is some use of ICT but more could be made of this to further broaden students' learning experience and independent working skills. Teachers' assessment of students' work is regular and thorough.
250. The course is well led and managed by the head of department. Teachers are committed to raising standards, regularly review their work and examination outcomes, work very well as a team and take responsibility for various aspects of the department's work. There is good target setting and monitoring for students based on statistics of their prior attainment. The departmental administrative assistant is playing an effective supportive role in this process. Students undertake regular self-reviews and discuss targets for improvement with their teachers. Business links and other extra-curricular enrichment activities are limited but students have visited a BMW car factory and are encouraged to attend Examination Board subject conferences. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

*Inspection judgement* *Sixth form grade* *School grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	3

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>3</b>
Students' achievement	3	3

<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>		<b>3</b>
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well students learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	3	3
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	2

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the principal		3
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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