

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **SEVEN KINGS SCHOOL**

Ilford

LEA area: Redbridge

Unique reference number: 102856

Headteacher: Mr Alan Steer

Reporting inspector: Mr Robin Coulthard  
11746

Dates of inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> January 2002

Inspection number: 193492

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Ley Street  
Ilford  
Essex

Postcode: 1G2 7BT

Telephone number: 020 8554 8935

Fax number: 020 8518 2975

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs P Green

Date of previous inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject sixth form	Aspect sixth form
11746	R Coulthard	Registered inspector	Music	The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught?
9053	V Phillips	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
24142	S McConville	Team inspector	English	
1503	T Browne	Team inspector	Mathematics	
29742	P Fyans	Team inspector	Chemistry	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30563	J Pentlow	Team inspector	Biology	
3525	P McGregor	Team inspector	Physics	
2501	R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and Design	How well is the school led and managed?
4475	K Remnant	Team inspector	Geography	
3674	G Marriott	Team inspector	History	
20830	G Smith	Team inspector	French	
28199	P Lawley	Team inspector	Media Studies	
1355	S Morgan	Team inspector	Design and Technology Critical Thinking	
30800	B Colley	Team inspector	Sociology	
10060	D Gutmann	Team inspector	Business Studies	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Seven Kings is an 11 –18 mixed multiracial comprehensive in the London Borough of Redbridge, The school serves an urban area of Ilford in which there are also selective schools. It has 1292 pupils, with 376 students in the very large sixth form. Most pupils come from owner-occupied homes. Nearly a quarter of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. More than two thirds of the pupils have English as an additional language, with about one in fifteen at an early stage of learning English. Most have family origins in the Indian sub-continent with a significant minority from the Caribbean and Africa. Two percent of pupils, mostly from Somalia, are refugees. Since 1990, the school has had a centre for pupils with physical disabilities. Eighteen per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is about average. The main needs relate to physical disability, moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties; 2.5 per cent of pupils have statements of special educational need. The school was designated a Beacon school in 1999 and became a Specialist College for Science and Technology in September, 2001. Overall, pupils are at average levels of attainment when they enter the school.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The school provides its pupils with an excellent education. Standards of attainment are high and pupils' achievements are excellent across the whole range of ability in comparison with similar schools. Standards of teaching are very good and often excellent. Staff with management responsibilities and the teaching and non-teaching staff unanimously implement relevant and enlightened policies and this has produced a secure school community in which all pupils are cared for and regarded as achievers. The outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher are endorsed and supported by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable governing body. The school constantly reflects on and reviews its provision to improve it further. The full integration of pupils from different ethnic origins and groups into the school - including pupils with special educational needs, pupils with physical disabilities and those with refugee status - has produced a very harmonious community that is dedicated to high achievement. Pupils are achieving at a very high level when compared with pupils with a similar starting point. The school gives very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Academic standards are very high. Pupils are achieving at a high level compared with national standards. The school is in the top five per cent nationally at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE, compared with similar schools.
- Teaching and learning are very good and often excellent.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are excellent and contribute significantly to the school's outstandingly purposeful and friendly atmosphere.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership and the school is very well managed.
- The school provides an excellent range of learning opportunities that enable pupils to develop academically, socially and culturally to a very high level.

#### **What could be improved**

- There are no significant areas for improvement

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made very good progress since it was last inspected in April, 1997. The standards, which were already above average, have improved faster than the national trend at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE. In the sixth form, standards have risen and are well above the national average. Teaching was already good and has improved significantly. The many strengths reported in the school have been maintained. National Curriculum requirements in ICT are now fully met. Resources have been improved significantly and opportunities for using ICT are well established in all areas of the curriculum. Tutor time is now purposefully and appropriately used.



Provision for personal and social education in Year 9 is now good. Religious education in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form complies with local requirements. While assemblies have clear moral, social and spiritual content, the school does not yet provide a statutory collective act of worship daily for all pupils. As recommended in the previous report, individual governors have developed useful links with curriculum areas.

## STANDARDS

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A*	in the top 5% well A*
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A		above average A
					above average B
					average C
					below average D
					well below average E

Results in the Year 9 assessments in 2001 were well above average in English and mathematics, and above average in science compared with all schools nationally. Compared with similar schools, that is those with a similar number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, the school's results were in the top five per cent in all three subjects. Pupils make excellent progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 and build on this in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results are outstanding with 81 percent gaining five or more passes at A\* to C in 2001, compared with a national average of 48 per cent. These results are well above average for all schools and very high compared with similar schools. In 2001, the school exceeded its targets by over 11 per cent, for pupils gaining five or more A\* to C grades. In 2001 the school was also in the top five percent of schools for A\* to G passes. All pupils achieved seven or more, which was better than the school's target and in the past four years only one pupil has left with fewer than five A\* to G passes. The rate of improvement in pupils' average point score at GCSE over the past five years has been above the national trend. At A-level, results remained above the national average from the previous year and with an increased point score per student. Attainment in the sixth form is well above the national average in comparison with schools and colleges nationally. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the standards of pupils currently in Year 9, Year 11 and Year 13 are at the same previously high levels and achievement remains very high for all pupils.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes to school are first rate. Pupils are highly motivated. Their commitment to learning is excellent.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons is exceptionally good because pupils are focused on work, rarely lose concentration and strive to make the most of opportunities for success. Their levels of self-discipline and consideration for others are remarkable. They behave very well outside the classroom. The conduct of older pupils is exemplary. Exclusions are very rare.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent. Pupils are mature and show far greater respect, tolerance and care for others than is often evident in society at large. This mirrors the way staff respect and value pupils highly. Relationships amongst the different racial groups in the school are outstandingly friendly.
Attendance	Attendance is well above average. Pupils and their families understand the importance of good attendance. Staff work hard to ensure that achievement is not limited by unnecessary absence. Excellent attendance in the sixth form, where absences are kept to an absolute minimum, supports very high levels of achievement.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Excellent

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 11, with a significant proportion of excellent teaching. In the sixth form, teaching is excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In English, mathematics and science, in Years 7 to 11, teaching is very good. When pupils enter the school, their learning skills are not highly developed, but they soon develop very well as pupils respond to teachers' enthusiasm and very high expectations. Planning and subject knowledge are excellent and teachers take into account the learning needs of pupils over the whole range of ability, including those at an early stage of learning English and those with special educational needs. They plan well for the range of pupils in each group and use a good range of teaching methods that are interesting and varied. Lessons move at a brisk pace and pupils complete a substantial amount of work in the time available. Pupils learn very well independently and are keen to achieve high standards. Pupils' excellent attitudes mean that they are very keen to learn and to do well. They listen carefully and work efficiently, individually and in groups, maintaining a high level of response in all lessons. The large group of support teachers and assistants is very well managed. They are well prepared for each lesson so that they work purposefully, and they show initiative by helping other pupils as well as those they are mainly supporting.

Literacy is very well taught across the curriculum. In line with an excellent policy, based on the National Literacy Strategy, teachers very effectively develop reading, writing, speaking and listening as a priority across the curriculum. Standards in numeracy are very good and developed well both in mathematics and other subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent. The curriculum provides a wide range of stimulating activities that enable all pupils to reach high levels of individual achievement. All statutory requirements are met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Excellent. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated within classes. Tasks and materials are suitably adapted to meet individual needs and a good level of support in class ensures that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Excellent. The large number of these pupils are very well supported and make excellent progress in both their language development and their general education.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Outstanding. The school's constant focus on friendship, excellence and opportunity ensures that its values and ethos of inclusion and achievement are nurtured in its everyday life and routines. Powerful contributions from teaching, the example set by staff and sixth formers, extra-curricular activities and community service, result in remarkable provision.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes exceptional care to support pupil's personal and academic needs. Procedures ensure early recognition of causes for concern or lack of progress and swift action to bring out the best in all pupils. First-rate guidance stems from the fact that staff know pupils' strengths and weaknesses very well. This is a key factor in pupils' academic and personal achievement.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher gives outstanding leadership and all those with responsibility implement a common philosophy which values all pupils as achievers. Planning is based on clearly identified priorities, which are shared at all levels in the school. The school is very efficiently managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellently. Governors have a very thorough knowledge of the school. They are enthusiastic and constructive in monitoring and guiding the school. They fulfil their statutory duties very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is constantly seeking to improve. Information from the regular monitoring of pupils' personal development, academic progress and achievement is used to set challenging but achievable targets. This has been a major factor in raising standards.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its resources and all spending supports educational priorities. The principles of best value are applied and the school has excellent plans for further development of the site. They have wisely taken into account what is provided elsewhere locally.

At the time of the inspection, some unsatisfactory aspects of accommodation were limiting activities in a few areas, but teachers were able to compensate for these drawbacks by planning carefully. Library provision for the main school is in cramped premises and the sixth form is without a suitable resource centre pending extensive planned development of this provision. Financial administration is excellent and the school seeks the best possible value for the money it spends.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school and make good progress. School helps them become mature and responsible</li> <li>• Teaching is good and teachers have high expectations of pupils</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents and is approachable when they have concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no issues about which more than ten per cent of parents had any concern.</li> </ul>

Parents are very positive about the opportunities and support the school offers their children. They have no significant concerns about the school's work or their children's progress. The inspectors agree with the outstandingly positive views the parents hold of the school. The inspection confirms their perception that the school is doing an excellent job.

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is much larger than most sixth forms and is heavily over-subscribed. It has twice as many girls as boys. Numbers have quadrupled since the last inspection with a substantial minority joining the sixth form from other schools. Just under ten per cent of students are eligible for free school meals compared with six per cent nationally. Most students take A-level courses for which the entry qualifications are six A\* to C grades, with a grade B in the subjects chosen for A-level. The school offers a small number of GNVQ courses and re-sit courses in GCSE English and mathematics. A minority of pupils leave the school after their GCSE examinations to take courses elsewhere which are more suited to their needs.

### HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is providing its students with an excellent education. Students achieve results which are well above average compared with other schools and colleges. The teaching is inspiring and the wide range of courses and enrichment activities give students many opportunities for personal and social development. Many carry out voluntary work which has significantly enhanced the reputation of the school in the community. The leadership and management are excellent and the sixth form gives very good value for money.

#### Strengths

- Results that are well above average
- Teaching is excellent and leads to highly effective learning
- Excellent attitudes ensure a very positive climate for learning and outstandingly harmonious social relationships
- Excellent leadership, co-ordination and day-to-day management
- Excellent support for students and use of assessment to set challenging targets for students and establish high expectations for them

#### What could be improved

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.*

### THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements 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	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Good</b> A-level results were above average in 2001, although not quite as good as students' results in other subjects. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. The students are highly motivated and work very hard.
Biology	<b>Excellent.</b> Very good and often excellent teaching lead to very good learning and achievement by students. Numbers gaining the highest grades are well above average at A-level.

Chemistry	<b>Excellent.</b> Results were in the top five per cent in 2001 and students did better than predictions based on their GCSE results. They are achieving very high standards as a result of very good teaching coupled with their excellent attitudes.
<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Overall judgement about provision, with comment</b>
Physics	<b>Excellent.</b> A- level results were well above average. Teachers are knowledgeable, have high expectations and teach very effectively. Students are exceptionally well motivated. The excellent system of tests ensures students are fully aware of what they do and do not understand.
Design and technology	<b>Very good.</b> Students achieve well. Subject management and the quality of teaching contribute significantly to the standards students attain.
Business studies	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching is very good and students' very good attitudes means that they are achieving very well and acquiring a very good understanding of business education.
Art and design	<b>Very good.</b> Results are well above average. Teaching is very good. Students achieve very well, often exceeding their predicted grades. The standard of literacy, and the analytical and critical thinking that underpins their work, is very high.
Music	<b>Good.</b> Results are above average. Teaching is good; students learn well and develop their musical strengths effectively as a result of individual help. Learning is well supported by a wide range of extra-curricular musical opportunities.
Media studies	<b>Very good.</b> Teaching and learning are very good and standards have risen significantly. Students are now achieving very well.
Geography	<b>Very good.</b> Results in 2001 were average but current standards are above average. Teaching and learning are very good and students' attitudes are excellent.
History	<b>Very good.</b> Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about history. Students are highly motivated and achieve very well.
Sociology	<b>Excellent.</b> Results are consistently well above average. Teaching is very good and employs a good variety of teaching methods. Students are enthusiastic and achieve very well.
Critical thinking	<b>Good.</b> Results were below average last year in this new course. This year standards have improved and they are now above average. Teaching is good and students are achieving well.
English literature	<b>Excellent.</b> Standards are well above the national average. Students are highly motivated and achieve very well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understand students' needs well.
French	<b>Very good.</b> Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very good standards.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Staff know students' strengths and weaknesses very well, which is a key factor in promoting high achievement. They provide an exceptionally high quality of guidance and support for personal and academic development. Procedures ensure that they identify difficulties quickly and can take swift action to bring out the best in all students. Staff make excellent use of assessment data to monitor students' progress and set individual targets.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Management of the sixth form is excellent. The staff are a highly effective team and day-to-day management of the sixth form is meticulous. The ethos for learning is very strong and students are kept aware of the high expectations the school has of their progress. Sixth form students have a prominent role in the school, are highly respected and valued and are very good role models for younger pupils. They make a very positive contribution to the school, reflecting the ethos for learning and fostering high achievement. There is a clear rationale for the sixth form and curriculum offered. The mainly academic curriculum serves the aspirations of the students very well.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are well taught and challenged, and helped to study independently.</li> <li>• The courses suit their talents and aspirations and there is a good range of enrichment activities.</li> <li>• Teachers are accessible for help and provide good personal support.</li> <li>• They enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it to others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few wanted more advice on future options.</li> <li>• A few felt that the school should respond to their young adult views more.</li> </ul>

Students' views of the school are very positive. Their responses to the questionnaire reflect concerns identified in other sixth forms about the new curriculum, pattern of examinations and general uncertainty about how courses and choices would work in practice. Most students are very happy with the guidance and opportunities provided by the school itself. A few individuals would welcome more specialised, independent guidance about their options in and beyond school. One or two sixth formers want a forum separate from the sixth form social committee for raising issues so that not only the sociable, lively and most confident students seem to have a voice and influence on school life. However, the inspection team thought that students already had easy access to senior managers who listened readily to their views.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

*Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement "outstanding" in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to "very weak".*

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**Academic standards are very high. Pupils are achieving at a high level compared with national standards. The school is in the top five per cent nationally at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE, compared with similar schools.**

1. The school is heavily oversubscribed and pupils are allocated to the school by the Local Education Authority according to published criteria. The school population fully reflects the ethnic mix of its catchment area through the presence of 70 per cent of pupils with English as a second language, through the presence of 41 pupils who have refugee status, and through the integration into the school of 32 pupils with physical disabilities. Pupils' standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are average. The results of national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were outstanding. In each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, pupils' performance is in the top five per cent of similar schools, that is in comparison with schools with a similar percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. At Level 5, pupils' attainment is well above the national average in English and science, and above average in mathematics. At Level 6, attainment is well above average in all three subjects. Standards have improved year by year since the previous inspection and at a rate that is above the national trend. Results for boys and girls are similar in mathematics and science, while in English girls' performance exceeds that of boys. The results of teacher assessment in other subjects indicate that standards are high across the curriculum.

2. The results in GCSE were also very high, again in the top five per cent of schools with a similar intake. The school is justly proud of the degree to which its academic results both reflect and endorse its philosophy. Seven Kings is a school where all pupils are not only valued highly as individuals, but each is regarded as a unique achiever. In practice, this means that by age 16 pupils over the whole range of ability are achieving very well. In the past four years, only one pupil has left the school with fewer than five GCSEs. In 2001, the entire cohort passed in at least seven subjects. Results have risen significantly since the previous inspection. In 2001, results for A\* to C passes were 81 per cent. This exceeded the school's expectations and target spectacularly – by 11 per cent. In no subject were results below average. GCSE results were particularly good in business studies, computer studies, history and combined science.

3. Results indicate that the school is highly successful in its inclusive approach to educating all of its pupils. The teaching and learning policy details the theory and practicalities of inclusive teaching and makes clear to teachers their obligations to provide appropriately for all pupils. Staff know well the potential of all pupils and are aware through regular checking of their progress. Teachers are realistic about challenging pupils in special educational groups and do not remain merely 'caring'. The work of the special needs team, those that provide for pupils at an early stage of learning English and the academic co-ordinators is directed towards raising all pupils' expectations of themselves. Suitable methods and resources are employed for each group. For example, some pupils cannot cope easily with quantities of loose-leaf paper. Staff respond very well in practical ways to the information they receive about individual pupils by means of individual education plans. The successful implementation of the demanding teaching and learning policy is clear from the outstanding achievements of all pupils, particularly at GCSE in 2001.

4. The school's sixth form offers a largely academic course in which students in the main prepare for A-level. This provision is carefully rationalised in relation to what is available locally from other providers of sixth form education. Entry requirements are rigorous in relation to the A-levels selected. Results reflect this, and the school's attainment at the end of Year 13 is well above average nationally.

Rigorous monitoring of students' progress, the setting of target grades and excellent teaching mean that many students achieve above what might be expected.

5. Standards in work seen during the inspection confirmed the very high standards that pupils achieve in examinations. In English, for example, pupils arrive in Year 7 with average levels of attainment and by the end of Year 9 they are very high in comparison with similar schools. The school makes excellent provision for literacy, which is an on-going priority. The National Literacy strategy is very well implemented and extends pupils' reading and writing skills. By Year 9, pupils read widely and fluently and write well in different styles and for different audiences. They use language discriminatingly across the curriculum because teachers emphasise the correct use of technical language in all subjects. In Years 10 and 11, work in progress was well above average. In art, pupils have built up good practice in using sketchbooks, so that, by Year 11, they achieve very well in still life work, benefiting from detailed feedback from the teacher and specific targets for future attainment. In Sociology, Year 11 pupils achieved very high standards in improving their mock examination answers about extended families and children's rights. The lesson focused closely on examination technique. The teacher's thorough subject knowledge and challenging expectations raised the pupils' expectations of themselves and equipped them to improve their performances.

### **Teaching and learning are very good and often excellent**

6. Teaching has improved significantly from its already good standard at the last inspection. As the principal means of driving up standards, teaching methods are constantly reviewed and refined in the light of experience and the results gained. An excellent teaching and learning policy guides staff and systematic monitoring of teaching develops its effectiveness. There is some excellent teaching at every level in the school. Overall, teaching is very good in Years 7 to 11, and in the sixth form it is excellent. Teachers are up-to-date specialists who prepare their lessons very well. Resources are carefully chosen and appropriate. Teaching methods are very good and suitably varied to maintain pupils' interest. The really outstanding features of the teaching are the relationships that exist between teachers and their classes and the teachers' high and very well informed expectations of the levels at which individual pupils should be working. Teachers know pupils' previous levels of attainment. They constantly track and monitor progress and a well-trying system provides constructive help and assistance for pupils who underachieve.

7. In a lesson on probability in Year 7, a lower mathematics group benefited from well-focused teaching. The aims of the lesson were made clear to the pupils, and the relationship of the lesson to the previous one. Literacy was developed by an emphasis on key words and very good use of the white-board. Pupils received strong support from the teacher and a member of the sixth form who was assisting. The impact of setting and of the National Numeracy strategy was seen clearly in action and pupils were able to make very good progress.

8. In an excellent Year 9 English lesson, the teacher used a section of text from the Shakespeare play they were studying, to develop understanding of the nature of a soliloquy and a range of literacy skills. She had prepared resources well and used them effectively. A good partnership between the teacher and the teaching assistant helped pupils with English as an additional language to make good progress. The balance of teacher-led and independent work was good and held pupils interest. The lively and well directed questioning and the teacher's enthusiasm motivated pupils. All these factors enabled pupils to deepen their understanding of the text, develop reading, writing and speaking skills, and as an added bonus, it made Shakespeare fun.

9. In Year 11, in design and technology, the teacher gave excellent differentiated feedback to pupils on their course work, enabling each to make confident and rapid progress in designing and making their



products using a variety of materials, supported by the skilful use of computer graphics. The teacher's wide knowledge of the properties of different materials enabled him to understand individual needs and support each pupil in a way that developed their confidence and expertise.

10. Such lessons as these are common in the school, and they are the outcome of very well organised and managed teaching and of an intention that all pupils should succeed. At Seven Kings, teachers respond vigorously to the philosophy of all pupils being achievers. They are aware of examples of 'best practice' and they combine this practical knowledge with their own enthusiasm and commitment, making teaching both scientific and vocational. This leads to a very good understanding of pupils as learners.

### **Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are excellent and contribute significantly to the school's outstandingly purposeful and friendly atmosphere**

11. Pupils adopt the school's values and conform to its rules and requirements very easily when they join in Year 7. Firstly, the school's expectations are made clear to them and all staff use the routines and apply the rules consistently. Secondly, older students are conspicuously good role models and very much in evidence promoting the school's values and helping the younger pupil to settle in their first year. Pupils in Year 7 become aware of sixth form students through the 'Buddy' system, where older pupils are allocated to junior classes and are available to younger pupils individually for advice. This works very well in the school. Buddies are available for pupils of any age. Pupils readily acknowledge their valuable help in sorting out problems.

12. Pupils learn very well, not only in response to the very good teaching they encounter, but because of their own natures and upbringing. The pupils have outstandingly positive attitudes throughout the school. They reflect their parents' values and those promoted by the school and this helps them to be proficient learners. In practical terms, pupils are good listeners and naturally obedient and respect the values of the school. They concentrate well and, in the school's outstanding atmosphere of mutual trust and goodwill, they collaborate purposefully in class. An RE lesson in Year 11 showed this at its best. The pupils debated in groups circumstances in which abortion might be justified. Their capacities to empathise with the case histories and other pupils' views were impressive. They made clear gains in their abilities to understand and advance arguments, avoiding prejudice. Their communication skills were refined and their learning encompassed moral judgements as well as an understanding of social issues. Their reasonableness and understanding of points of view other than their own were very clear in the whole-class discussion. This was excellent learning.

13. Pupils behave well in class and around the school. The sense of each pupil being responsible for his or her own conduct is quickly established. Pupils are punctual and rates of attendance are excellent. Behaviour around the building is excellent. Before school and at the changes of lesson, pupils move about in a self-controlled and considerate manner. Pupils are trusted and therefore allowed the privilege of being inside the building at break and lunch time. This trust is not misplaced. The condition of the building is good, despite its constant use. There are no graffiti. Newly built or adapted parts of the building, such as the music block, remain in very good order. The attractive displays of art and other work remain intact and continue to enhance the quality of the learning environment. Lunchtime in the dining hall is very civilised. Pupils are lively but considerate and thoughtful. The efficiency and care of the diners enables a very large volume of pupils to use the premises in a comparatively short time. The dining hall remains a pleasant environment throughout the lunch hour. There are no graffiti around the school, and litter is disposed of sensibly. Routines for pupils' arrival and departure at either end of the school day run very smoothly because of the pupils'

co-operation and good behaviour. There are no racial tensions within the school. As at the time of the previous inspection, the degree of racial harmony at the school is very impressive.

14. What is routine in the school might be regarded as exceptional elsewhere. The full integration of all groups of pupils within the community is the norm in the school. At testing times, such as the end of break when large numbers of pupils need to move efficiently to classes, the self-control of pupils and their awareness of others are quite exceptional. At a corridor junction, groups of pupils from all levels in the school were moving unsupervised. Pupils made room for those in wheelchairs to pass and several pupils made their way independently through the throng. The courtesy and safe passage they were afforded were clearly routine behaviour.

**The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and management is very good or excellent at every level.**

15. The excellent management of the school has varied aspects. The school is dedicated to living up to its motto – ‘friendship, excellence, opportunity’. It is highly successful in each of these. The philosophy that underpins all of the school’s work is centred on pupils and the belief that every pupil is an achiever and therefore must be appropriately catered for. The success of this philosophy is evident in the outstanding results the school achieves for pupils and students across the whole range of ability.

16. As a first priority, the headteacher seeks to appoint teachers who share the school’s values, and in this he has been very successful. He has a thorough knowledge of the school’s needs, is fully aware of emerging issues which will become national priorities and takes full advantage of opportunities for the school to be involved in research and other initiatives outside the school. This leads to a furthering of the development of the school and the effectiveness and career development of individual teachers. Current initiatives are links with the National College for School Leadership, and involvement with an educational research programme with the School of Education at Cambridge University. As a Beacon school, Seven Kings has been able to influence many other schools through courses and visits. A recent course on the use of data involved 40 schools over a wide area. The headteacher sees this as a two-way process and readily acknowledges the advantages for the school that result from staff’s familiarity with practice elsewhere.

17. To translate the school’s motto and philosophy into practical terms, it is essential to establish the right structures, which must be responsive to changing needs and priorities. The headteacher adopts a reflective style of leadership. This enables him to weigh and evaluate the school’s current attainments and provision; it has enabled him to anticipate future needs and directions over his long tenure of the post. In this, he has the assistance of an excellent governing body: committed and concerned, and very well informed. Governors properly hold the school to account and have a very good knowledge of strengths and areas for development. They are very supportive and have a good knowledge of the working of individual departments. Their commitment in time goes beyond what is usual and, while remaining critical friends, they are overtly enthusiastic about the school’s success.

18. To evaluate the performance of the school requires personnel and systems. The headteacher manages a purposeful and very effective senior management team. Accountability and responsibilities are clearly defined. The school closely monitors all aspects of provision through a carefully formalised schedule. These include achievement levels, the quality of teaching, attendance, behaviour, inclusion, and the curriculum. Year heads, form tutors and academic co-ordinators have clear roles in monitoring pupils’ academic and pastoral welfare. As a means of constantly reviewing and improving provision, staff are encouraged to share good practice. The school had anticipated the formal establishment of performance management and all staff, teaching and non-teaching are included in this. The system

runs very smoothly and its effectiveness makes a significant contribution to the standards attained by pupils. Heads of department monitor the teaching of their departments regularly and they meet regularly with their line managers and the headteacher. All meetings are purposeful and lead to decisions and targets to be met subsequently. Strategies to raise standards, based on focusing on underachievement and underpinning very high attainment are embedded in review processes. Pupils are frequently assessed and regularly interviewed as part of the excellent support systems.

19. As part of the pursuit of excellence, the analysis of data from examinations is rigorous. This enables departmental success to be evaluated and targets set for subsequent achievement. This evaluation of data provides objective information about every pupil in the school against which their subsequent achievements are measured. The school reviews its provision in relation to achievement and management by regular comparisons with other schools. The school considers rightly that the constructive use of performance data has been the single most effective cause of the rise in pupils' levels of attainment. Data is analysed by sub group, such as gender and race. Boys' attainment is comparatively high but lags behind that of girls, and mentoring is being increased to reduce the gap in boys' and girls' attainment. At present, Seven Kings is in the top five per cent of schools in every category of comparison with similar schools. Each year group has a head of year and an academic co-ordinator, which ensures that pupils' academic and personal development are linked. In Years 7 and 8, pupils have interviews as part of the personal health and social education programme. These, and the continuing contact with form tutors ensure that their academic and personal needs are well known to staff.

20. As part of cultivating 'friendship' from the school's motto into practical terms, the headteacher leads from the front. He is very enthusiastic about the school, supportive of the staff and dedicated to making every pupil successful. As with every other school principle and policy, the maintaining of good relationships is endorsed and furthered by every member of the school's staff, teaching, administrative and maintenance. As a leader, the headteacher empowers staff to develop expertise, flourish and give of their best to colleagues, leading to the comment from a teacher, 'I feel privileged to be able to do the job I'm doing at this school'. The appointment and retention of staff are constant priorities, but successfully achieved in a difficult geographical area. The commitment and wholeheartedness of staff are to a large extent responsible for the outstandingly positive attitudes which the pupils display in class and in their demeanour around the school. Pupils' attitudes merited the most frequent use of 'excellent' in the course of the recent inspection.

21. In order to raise standards still further, the school keeps every area under review. School priorities arise from the school's own analysis of its performance and whole-school priorities emanate from departmental reviews and from the need to respond to national priorities. The whole staff, supported by the governors, have ownership of the development plan through consultation and a successful line-management system. Previous priorities, such as literacy, teaching and learning and ICT, are retained because the school realises that it must never stand still.

### **The school provides an excellent range of learning opportunities that enable pupils to develop academically, socially and culturally to a very high level**

22. The curriculum has been carefully devised to match the interests, aptitudes and needs of all pupils. It covers all subjects of the National Curriculum in appropriate depth. In order to implement the principles that all pupils are potential achievers, and to include all groups of pupils fully in its provision, the school has invested heavily in small classes. Setting is used judiciously to enable pupils' needs to be best met. For example, pupils are grouped by attainment for English, mathematics and French in Years 7 to 11. From Year 8, they are set in science too. Information and communication technology

(ICT) is taught through all curriculum areas in Years 7 to 9. This provision is carefully planned and monitored to ensure that all required aspects are covered. ICT skills are further developed through an ICT-based research and communication skills course in Years 7 and 8. A varied personal, social and health education course is well co-ordinated throughout the school and provides pupils with worthwhile experiences which contribute much to their personal development. Very good provision for pupils with special needs guarantees them access to the whole curriculum. The quality of support provided is exceptional, both in class and in withdrawal groups. The adaptation of resources to suit pupils' needs and the carefully targeted assistance in class ensure that all groups of pupils have similar access to the curriculum. Long-established reading recovery programmes have operated successfully in Years 7 and 8, a 'catch-up' programme began in 2001 and a summer literacy school was held.

23. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is broad and balanced and provides wide opportunities for pupils to meet their needs and aspirations. The compulsory core of subjects, English language and literature, mathematics, science, technology, information technology, PE and PSE, which includes religious education, is supplemented by a good range of other options. ICT is being developed purposefully, in line with the school's status as a Technology College. All pupils follow a course that leads to the awarding of a certificate. Three modern foreign languages are available, French, Spanish and Urdu. Flexibility in choices is provided by allowing some pupils to consolidate basic learning skills rather than learning a foreign language. Others can focus on areas of particular strength in the arts or humanities, or develop further their computer skills. Lower-attaining pupils can follow a course of curriculum support, where they benefit from a very favourable pupil/teacher ratio and concentrate on meeting the demands of other subjects.

24. A very wide range of opportunities is provided to enrich the basic curriculum. Vocal and instrumental tuition enables a large number of pupils to develop their musical skills. Music and drama provide many pupils with high profile occasions for performing within the school and elsewhere. The performing abilities of pupils are encouraged through regular talent shows. These enable pupils to display and celebrate the wide range of cultures represented amongst them. School teams flourish in sport and these continue to grow. In 2001, the school received a Sportsmark Award. Pupils develop awareness of the wider world through the extensive provision of trips and visits in connection with most areas of the curriculum. European visits have recently included France, Spain, Italy and Austria. Sixth form representatives have visited Auschwitz and the school took a leading part in the first Holocaust Commemoration Ceremony at Westminster Hall in 2001. Educational links further afield include a 'twinning' arrangement with two schools in South Africa.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

25. Since there are no major issues which the school needs to tackle, governors, the headteacher and staff may wish to consider action on the lesser points mentioned below. Although there are areas for improvement identified in most sixth form subjects, these are relatively minor and are not having a significant effect on standards.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

26.

- An act of collective worship is not provided on a daily basis for all pupils – this is a breach of statutory requirements.
- The use of ICT is not firmly embedded in all subjects in the sixth form – this is explained further in Part D of this report



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	43
	Sixth form	62
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		52

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	11	12	12	8	0	0	0
Percentage	26	27	27	18	0	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	11	31	16	4	0	0	0
Percentage	18	50	26	6	0	0	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	912	376
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	223	38

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	171	10

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	869

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	34

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.5
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

## Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	108	80	188

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	83	85	85
	Girls	68	59	64
	Total	151	144	149
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (85)	77 (75)	80 (66)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	50 (51)	60 (54)	45 (39)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	89	72
	Girls	68	60	49
	Total	147	149	121
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (71)	81 (79)	65 (70)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (35)	62 (57)	41 (31)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	95	87	182

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	71	95	95
	Girls	77	87	87
	Total	148	182	182
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	81 (69)	100 (99)	100 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	53.8 (49.6)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	n/a	n/a
	National	■	n/a

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	64	99	163

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	22	21.3	21.6 (20.3)	a/n	3	3 (3)
National	17.8	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.7)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	n/a	n/a
	National	■	n/a



### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	35
Black – African heritage	27
Black – other	29
Indian	292
Pakistani	106
Bangladeshi	34
Chinese	1
White	231
Any other minority ethnic group	122

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	4	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y 7 – Y 13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	85.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.1

#### **Education support staff: Y 7 – Y 11**

Total number of education support staff	34
Total aggregate hours worked per week	949

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.9
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7– Y 11**

Key Stage 3	22.9
Key Stage 4	22.0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/1
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	£
Total income	4,119,734
Total expenditure	4,029,339
Expenditure per pupil	3,082
Balance brought forward from previous year	151,135
Balance carried forward to next year	241,530

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	30.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	39.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1288
Number of questionnaires returned	455

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	41	2	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	56	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	40	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	48	8	2	3
The teaching is good.	58	37	3	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	41	9	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	38	4	0	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	79	19	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	42	45	8	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	66	32	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	36	3	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	37	6	1	7

## **PART D: THE SIXTH FORM**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and students' achievements**

27. Standards in the school have risen consistently since the previous inspection when they were overall in line with the national average. The school's A-level results in 2000 were well above average for the substantial majority of students, that is those studying two or more A-level subjects, both in comparison with similar schools and with all schools and colleges nationally. Results for the very few students entered for fewer than two A-level or AS-level examinations were in line with national averages.

28. In 2000, in subjects where there were sufficient candidates to make comparisons with national averages significant, students' attainment was in the top five per cent nationally in chemistry, and well above average in art and design, biology, English literature, history, physics and sociology. Results were above the national average in business studies, computer studies and mathematics. Results were in line with the national average in communication studies, drama, French, design and technology, general studies, geography and vocational studies, but below average in critical thinking, which was a new course.

29. Standards being currently attained in Years 12 and 13 are well above average overall. They are well above average in English literature, biology, chemistry, physics, art and design, design and technology and sociology. Standards are above average in mathematics, business studies, geography, history and media studies, music, critical thinking and French. In media studies, standards have been below average, but have risen recently. In 2001, AS results were above average and present work indicates that students are likely to gain above average results in the forthcoming A-level examinations.

30. Between a quarter and a third of students join the school each year in Year 12, fulfilling the same entry requirements as those who join the sixth form from within the school. All achieve very well, whether newcomers or pupils who had taken GCSE at the school. The good advice students receive before joining the sixth form and the consequent suitability of the courses ensure that few students fail to complete their course. Because of the high standard of planning, the teachers' detailed knowledge of students' past and present performance, and the school's commitment to high achievement, all pupils are challenged appropriately. Provision for all groups within the community, those with special educational needs, with English as an additional language and those with physical disabilities, is excellent. No gender issues affect students' levels of attainment.

#### **Students' attitudes, values and personal development**

31. Students focus impressively on achieving the best possible academic results through relentless hard work. As a result, there is a remarkable work ethic at the top of the school which has a powerful effect not only on any sixth formers with less sense of purpose than most, but also on younger pupils. Students' attitudes to school are impeccable. Their behaviour in class is exemplary, with a single-minded focus on learning that occasionally lifts the quality of a lesson. Students' outstanding attitudes ensure that even the few lessons which are mundanely taught remain positive learning experiences.

32. Students value the rich range of opportunities available to them at school and have no hesitation in making the most of these. They make an exceptional contribution to the life of the school and wider communities, showing an outstanding sense of personal and social responsibility. They organise the school's "Buddies" system, which goes beyond face-to-face support for pupils with problems, to

include a designated area where a group of people can meet and a web-page with information on ways of seeking help. A small group of sixth formers is working on a pilot project for mentoring underachieving Year 6 pupils in three local primary schools. Individuals with gifts and talents in subjects such as mathematics or sport offer help spontaneously or informally to younger pupils who want to do better in those areas. Students relish their chances to use initiative and organise activities for others in school, as with the debating society, fashion and talent shows and Amnesty International club. As a result, their personal development is impressive, with an outlook, maturity and skills that provide an excellent foundation for further learning and service to the community in adult life.

33. Students build an outstanding range of strong relationships, reflecting a striking level of respect and acceptance of diverse backgrounds and talents. They value what others offer and listen to their opinions with courtesy and care. This is evident in the way students interact with and, when appropriate, help those in wheelchairs or with disabilities. The sixth form committee is energetic in its organisation of social, sporting and charity events.

34. Attendance is excellent. Sixth form students know that attendance and punctuality make a difference to their success, so they accept the rigorous attention teachers give to these matters. It is not unusual for them to thank the supervisor of the study centre for keeping them on task, once results are known, in spite of any irritation about rules and checks during the term. As a result, they miss lessons only for good reasons, such as university interviews, because their desire to succeed is so strong.

#### **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

35. Teaching and learning are excellent overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They are enthusiastic and articulate about what they teach and communicate this enthusiasm effectively to their students. Teachers' have very high expectations of students. They constantly enable students to extend their learning beyond their own expectations of themselves. For example, in a chemistry lesson in Year 13, students' use of technical language developed very well and their knowledge from different modules of the course was tested and effectively consolidated when they answered challenging questions on the properties of benzene.

36. Teachers' planning of lessons is very good. Objectives are clearly stated so that students' learning is carefully focused. Resources are appropriate, carefully chosen and interesting. Time is very well used. Teachers establish a very good pace for lessons by swiftly recalling previous work. Challenging deadlines encourage and ensure a very good pace of learning. Students' learning skills are highly developed. They work hard and are highly motivated. Students' conduct is excellent, as are relationships with staff. This means that communication between teachers and students is very effective, enabling teachers to have a very clear knowledge of students' needs. Questioning is very well used to ascertain and extend students' understanding. In a lesson on A-level law, the teacher challenged pupils expertly through pertinent questioning to enable them to understand the difference between natural law and utilitarianism. He related new moral concepts to previously studied case histories and scenarios, thereby advanced their learning conspicuously. In addition, previous learning was effectively consolidated.

37. Teaching methods are excellent. In a business education lesson, the teacher made the lesson objective – motivation in business – vivid by linking it with the events in Rwanda and the current volcano crisis in the independent state of Congo. Teachers' planning is closely related to examination requirements. The evaluation of students' work in lessons and the marking of their projects are used very well to evaluate students' progress and to give them advice on how to improve their work. In a

design and technology lesson in Year 12 on product analysis and design, the teacher used the examination marking criteria to show the pupils what was required for greater success. They used rigorous questioning so that the students were encouraged to justify or modify their design, thereby improving them and clarifying their thinking. Teachers have detailed knowledge of students' previous attainment. - They use this to predict grades and keep students up to the mark. Students readily acknowledge and appreciate teachers' willingness to give extra time to support them individually. This level of individual attention enables students with special educational needs and those with physical disability, or those who are at an early stage of learning English to make very good progress and to learn very effectively.

38. Individual assistance is a valuable feature in many lessons. For example in Year 13 music lesson, where the students were composing with the use of computers. The teacher used his extensive knowledge of ICT to guide the students. However, he did not provide students with answers but gave them advice and confidence in the technical process so that they could, with growing independence, extend their skills and make their own artistic decisions. Students' learning benefits greatly from their readiness both to apply their intellects to tasks they tackle and to be creative and imaginative. In design and technology, all pupils worked to the limits of their capacities in finalising design and practical assignments for A-level. Their ideas, which included a pushchair, a device for carrying cricket gear and a recycling bin, were imaginatively designed to meet a range of needs. They used specialist vocabulary to explain their designs in detail and showed very good understanding of design processes and manufacturing materials.

39. The development of students' literacy is a constant priority. Note taking is practised regularly and formal written work, often drafted with the use of ICT, is a strong feature in some subjects. Discussion is a feature of almost all lessons. This develops students' skills as listeners and provides opportunities for them to justify and explain their work, and to reconsider and refine their ideas. Teachers constantly work to develop skills of literacy, including debate, research and presentation, to enable students individually to achieve their highest standards. In general studies in Year 12, students assessed each other's performance in class presentations on questions such as, 'Can faith move mountains?' and 'Money is the root of evil'. They evaluated research, content and communication and showed their intellectual commitment by developing some of the ideas further. Students had used ICT skilfully in preparing their presentations and standards were above average. The use of ICT is developing well, both for research and presentation. However, the inspection findings showed that, while standards of work are very high, ICT is not yet incorporated enough into planning in chemistry, business studies, art and design, sociology and French.

40. Homework is carefully set to extend work done in class and to develop learning and research skills at an appropriate level for the students' courses of study. Students' capacity to work independently means that homework makes a significant contribution to their overall progress. Their independence and initiative, together with teachers' careful planning, offset the difficulties of researching in school during the building programme which will shortly include the provision of a new learning resource centre.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?**

41. The school offers a large range of A and AS-level courses together with the opportunity to re-sit English and mathematics at GCSE. It also offers GNVQ at intermediate level in business studies. These courses are provided as a result of local demand and the school sees all its provision within the context of other locally available courses. The curriculum offer, together with the general studies and extracurricular programme, provides an excellent range of high quality learning and enrichment

opportunities to all sixth form students. Religious education is taught within the general studies programme followed by all students and meets the statutory requirements at this level.

42. Through a variety of valuable links with other institutions, such as Queen Mary and Westfield College, the Royal Institution, local charities and other local schools, students have access to experiences beyond those associated with the classroom. They attend lectures, use advanced equipment, give demonstrations, work with local artists, and make a wide range of educational visits, including field study trips.

43. Personal development is continued through the Centre Activities programme which is very varied and includes such opportunities as community service, sports leadership and outdoor pursuits at residential centres. It is also fostered through the 'Buddies' scheme, where sixth form students act as advisers to younger pupils. A variety of clubs, such as the debating society and the Amnesty International club, together with participation in school productions, provides students with excellent opportunities to develop their own interests alongside their academic studies.

44. The courses on offer in the sixth form build on the prior achievement of students. Entry qualifications are used to ensure that students will be successful in the courses they take. As a result the majority of students make very good progress during the sixth form. Students with special educational needs or physical disability who qualify for membership of the sixth form are very well catered for and make very good progress. Every effort is made to ensure that these students can participate fully in what the sixth form has to offer.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

### **Advice, support and guidance**

45. The sixth form benefits from the same very high quality support available throughout the school, based on diagnosis and understanding of strengths and weaknesses in academic and personal achievement. In addition, the organisation of guidance in the sixth form allows for individual attention, through personal interviews and regular contact to ensure that progress is tracked rigorously and targets agreed carefully. Every effort is made to reduce underachievement, with analysis of reasons for it and agreement on action to improve performance. Relationships are very constructive. This allows help and encouragement to be offered formally and informally. Tutors and the sixth form management team provide timely and carefully considered guidance on university and other applications. During a settling-in period while the new curriculum and examinations have been introduced, the school has maintained high standards of careers education and guidance. Help and advice are thorough and sharply focused, whatever a student's abilities and aspirations. Teachers offer concerned and sensitive support to individuals with personal or health problems. Information on academic progress is very clear, focused on helping students to achieve in line with their capabilities. The school readily shares information on progress with parents. The school does all it can to give students the best possible care, with scrupulous attention to their health, safety and well-being. Students with disabilities are fully integrated in the sixth form community.

### **Assessment**

46. The school has excellent arrangements for monitoring students' attainment and using performance data to help raise standards further. GCSE and other assessment data are used to establish the minimum expectations of individual students on sixth-form courses. Teachers monitor the progress of students very systematically and detailed records are built up. Students know their individual targets and how well they are doing, and the teachers offer a considerable amount of individual help. In ICT for example, students receive extensive information about the course requirements, the planned coverage and assessment criteria. Students on all courses are involved in reviewing their progress and

drawing up action plans that incorporate specific targets. The school also uses assessment data well to evaluate course provision, for example in analysing students' performance according to ethnicity, gender or subject.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?**

47. Parents and students are very positive about the rich range of opportunities offered in the sixth form. Parents have no significant concerns about the school's work or their children's progress. Parents and potential sixth formers are left in no doubt about what the school expects of students and how strongly it focuses on achievement, both personal and academic. They value highly what the school aims to do and are very clear about the expectations related to sixth form study. The school keeps parents informed regularly about events, achievements and their children's progress. Parents value the high quality dialogue between home and school. As a result, there is very high attendance at parent consultation meetings and swift responses if teachers ask parents to contact them about progress or other matters.

48. Students value highly what the school provides. Their willingness to rise to the challenges offered is evident in their huge commitment to their studies and to service in the school and wider community. They are deeply involved in the life of the school, particularly through their work for the sixth form committee and in managing a wide range of activities for younger pupils. They make a significant contribution to the school's climate of harmony, scholarship and opportunity, and ethos of success and personal pride, in the example they set for younger pupils. Both newcomers and those who started in Year 7 show a sense of belonging and determination to succeed. The head boy, head girl, students of the year and committee members are as likely to have joined the school in the sixth form as to have stayed on, reflecting a vibrant and cohesive community. Students work hard and strive to make the most of the chances they are given to extend, enrich and enjoy their experiences of learning.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

49. Management of the sixth form is highly effective. There is a clear rationale for the sixth form and the curriculum offered. The mainly academic curriculum serves the aspirations of the students very well. The management of the sixth form is guided by thoughtful policies which detail the responsibilities of staff and students and set the high level of expectation that the school has of teachers and students. Under the overall leadership of the headteacher, a head of sixth form undertakes the management of the sixth form. Two assistants, who each have responsibility for one of the year groups help with the day-to-day organisation. Procedures are tight, for example over attendance and registration, and well understood by students. Communications are excellent, resulting in very efficient management.

50. Sixth form students have a prominent role in the school. They are highly respected and valued for their work in the local community and in their informal contact with younger pupils in the school. Younger pupils look up to them and learn by their example to work hard and aim for highest standards possible. In this and in other ways sixth formers exercise an important leadership role that they themselves can learn from. They make a very positive contribution to the main school by reflecting the ethos for personal achievement. The sixth formers are central to the school's success.

51. All students follow an effective induction programme prior to joining the school. It enables them to 'taste' the subjects they have chosen and fully understand any work that has to be completed before beginning Year 13 courses. Expectations about work and responsibilities in the school are made very clear. Consequently, once the term begins and students complete the formalities of enrolment, very few



leave or change courses. The proportions vary, but each year between a quarter and a third of the students studying in the sixth form have taken their GCSE examinations in other local schools.

52. Governors are very knowledgeable about the sixth form and work closely with the senior management team on their monitoring of standards and to plan for improvements. As in the main school, governors are highly effective in carrying out their statutory responsibilities. There is a shared concern between governors and the senior management team about the inadequate library provision and a keen desire to find ways to resolve it.

53. The management of the academic and personal support that students receive is excellent whether on a day-to-day basis or in preparation for higher education and employment. The very good systems for monitoring teaching that are in place in the main school apply also to the sixth form. The quality and use of information generated centrally, of examination results and the on-going assessments of individual students, are excellent. Teachers are able to reflect on the impact and effectiveness of their teaching by comparing students' achievements across the range of courses they are studying. As in the main school, the current focus is on improving teaching and learning. Teaching is very effective and has many features of excellence. Performance in examinations reflects very good achievement and added value in relation to students' attainment on entry. As in the main school, targets for improving standards in the sixth form are set and closely monitored.

54. The strategic use of resources is excellent. The planned developments and forecasts for spending meet the academic and social needs of students well. The headteacher calculates that the sixth form is able to run very effectively at a lower cost than the income generated by the numbers of students who enrol. The excellent provision in the sixth form, seen during the inspection, supports this decision. Some funds are currently being diverted from the sixth form and successfully used to raise standards in Years 7-9, for example by providing additional support for language development and support for pupils with learning difficulties. In this way the headteacher is 'investing' in the younger pupils and the future sixth form. Principles of best value are rigorously applied.

55. A key strength of the school is the team of dedicated staff, including experienced and highly qualified specialist teachers, support staff, administrators, technicians and site managers. The headteacher has been highly effective in developing a team with a shared commitment to improvement. There is an excellent match of teachers and support staff to the demands of advanced level courses, achieved through skilled management and longer term planning. In particular, links with teacher training institutions have helped in recruiting teachers who are qualified to teach subjects where there are shortages nationally. In this way, sixth form students benefit from the advice on current courses and entry requirements to universities as well as high calibre teaching.

## **Resources**

56. Resources are adequate across all subjects. However, access to computers is limited in mathematics. Because of current building work, there is temporarily no separate library for the sixth form, but firm plans exist to provide, as a priority, an appropriate library and resource centre. In the meantime, staff have ensured by careful planning that the lack of library resources has no detrimental effect on the standards students attain. There are shortages of books for some subjects, while resources for other subjects are stored in teaching areas and are not easily accessible outside lessons. Improvements to the sixth form accommodation are due to begin later in the year.

**PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM**

In the inspection, 15 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 2001.

*GCE AS-level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	2	50	52	0.0	2	0.5	0.8
Chemistry	1	0.0	41	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.8
Mathematics	7	71	62	57	15	2.9	1.5

*GCE A level and AVCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	21	100	96	62	46	7.5	6.6
Biology	51	98	88	61	34	7.2	5.2
Business Studies	33	100	92	27	32	6.2	5.5
Chemistry	63	100	90	78	43	8.6	5.9
Communication Studies	17	100	93	12	31	5.3	5.5
Computer Studies	21	100	86	13	23	5.1	4.6
Drama	12	100	99	25	38	6.3	6.6
Economics	26	81	89	-	36	3.31	5.52
English Language	8	75	91	-	30	3.25	5.3
English Literature	39	100	95	56	37	7.1	6.0
French	9	100	89	22	38	5.8	5.6
Full Design and Technology	9	100	91	22	30	5.6	5.3
General Studies	24	88	85	21	30	5.0	4.9
Geography	7	86	92	29	38	5.7	5.7
History	16	100	88	56	35	7.4	5.5
Mathematics	60	93	87	48	43	6.2	5.8

Music	3	100	93	67	35	8.0	5.7
Other Social Studies	29	93	87	10	34	4.2	5.3
Physics	15	100	88	73	40	7.9	5.7
Sociology	33	100	86	67	35	7.4	5.3
Spanish	2	100	89	100	39	10.0	5.7
Vocational Studies	9	67	76	11	26	3.8	4.4

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

##### Strengths

- A-level results that have improved in recent years and are above average
- Highly motivated students who work very hard and produce accurate, well-presented work
- Good teaching and learning that follow well-planned schemes of work
- Knowledgeable and enthusiastic specialist teachers

##### Areas for improvement

- Too few opportunities for students to extend their understanding and skills by discussing mathematical ideas and methods
- Too little formal leadership and management of developments in sixth-form mathematics, including new courses and the use of computers

57. The inspection covered the AS and A-level courses offered by the school, and focused on A-level. Students undertake a combination of modules in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. The school also provides the opportunity for A-level further mathematics and a re-sit GCSE course, although these were not inspected.

58. Results at A-level in 2001 were above the national average, although slightly below the students' performance in other subjects. Also in 2001, the Year 12 students achieved very good AS-level grades. From the evidence of current work and lessons, the students achieve well. The subject has become increasingly popular with students, including an increasing proportion of girls. Over recent years the trend in A-level results has been upward, with results in 2000 that were well above the national average.

59. The overall standard of work seen in lessons and in students' files is above average. Students show that they learn the necessary facts, ideas and techniques and use these to produce large volumes of neat and accurate work. Early in Year 12, the students learn a wide range of algebraic skills and apply these effectively later. For example, students confidently manipulated indices in some quite demanding work on integration. In a Year 13 lesson, students showed a good recall of formulae when learning new ideas about samples in statistics. Both male and female students achieve the standards expected in lessons, even though some groups have a marked gender imbalance. Statistics options tend to be more popular with females, while male students favour mechanics.

60. Teaching is good overall. Students learn effectively from teaching that systematically covers the content of the examination syllabuses. The teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and confident. They are clear in explaining solutions, which they often set out very neatly on the board. The teachers

have high expectations of students' accuracy and neatness in presentation. Teaching methods tend to involve mostly explanation and practice, and teachers often use skilful questioning. A relative weakness is that students are insufficiently involved in discussing mathematical ideas or methods, for example through discussion in pairs, or explaining solutions to the class. However, in an effective Year 12 pure mathematics lesson, individual students presented solutions on the board and the teacher used this to extend everyone's understanding. In a Year 13 mechanics lesson, students improved their understanding by discussing in pairs how they would solve a problem about an elastic string. Individuals were then challenged to explain the necessary diagrams and equations to the class.

61. The students are highly motivated and hard working. This contributes significantly to their progress, both during lessons and through homework. Students are very attentive and responsive to their teachers. Occasionally the pace of learning is slow, for example when students copy notes from the board. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent. Teachers offer students considerable extra help outside lessons. They regularly mark work and use common tests across groups. Alongside the school's excellent target setting arrangements, the department monitors students' progress well.

62. Leadership and management of mathematics have been in transition. Current developments include changing A-level syllabuses and developing the use of computers and the induction of new staff. A detailed scheme of work that fully covers the content of the syllabus has been produced. Leadership in the department ensures there is a positive, supportive ethos in which the students are motivated and enjoy working hard. However, a more formal approach to the leadership and management of sixth form mathematics would further enhance provision. The department would benefit from documentation about sixth form arrangements and developments, such as the use of computers and the sharing of the good practice that exists.

## **Biology**

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **excellent**.

### Strengths

- Well above average results at A-level
- The emphasis on independent learning and students taking responsibility for their own learning
- Very good assessment leading to effective monitoring and support of students
- The very good range of enhancement opportunities
- Very good teaching, with high expectations of students leading to very good learning
- An effective curriculum that aids learning by linking scientific concepts to everyday examples

### Areas for improvement

- More focused marking for students not attaining the highest grades, giving them specific advice on how to improve

63. The A-level examinations results over the last three years show a rising trend with those in 2000 and 2001 being well above the national average. The percentage of students who obtained the highest grades is very high - sixty per cent compared to a national average of thirty-four per cent. Male and female students did equally well. In relation to their GCSE results, most students did better than expected and so made very good progress.

64. The standard of work of the current year 12 and 13 students is well above average. Students gained a good understanding of oxygen transport in cells, the uptake of oxygen by the placenta, transpiration in plants and population pyramids. No practical work was seen during the inspection. A particular strength is the way the students apply their knowledge to a variety of situations and a weaker aspect of their work is in the interpretation of graphs. The quality of work involving ICT is

high.

65. The courses at AS and A-level show suitable progression from the GCSE course. The entry level to the course is such that students are likely to succeed and so the majority of students achieve grades at or close to their target grade. The needs of all students are provided for and excellent use made of a wide range of enrichment activities such as, the use of the electron microscope at Queen Mary College, and attendance at science conferences lectures and courses. Very good use is made of resources but the library does not have sufficient resources to be an effective research base. The accommodation is satisfactory. However, some science lessons are taught in general classrooms and the school would benefit from an increase in the number of laboratories. Teachers' careful planning ensures that students' attainment is not adversely affected, but practical demonstrations are occasionally restricted.

66. Teaching is very good and two of the five lessons seen were excellent. As a result, students learn very well. A variety of different styles is used and particular strengths within teaching are the high expectations of the students, with an emphasis on applying the knowledge learned in a variety of ways. Work in folders indicates that students develop responsibility for their own learning well. All work is carefully linked to examination requirements and carefully related to everyday situations. The key skills of literacy and numeracy are developed where possible, as is the use of ICT. Minor weaknesses in some lessons are the missed opportunities for students to engage in self-assessment before sharing ideas, and a tendency for teachers to develop concepts, rather than drawing out the information from the students.

67. Work in student's folders consists of notes they have made along with the frequent use of examination and other questions which require students to apply their knowledge. The departmental policy of developing the students' skills in taking responsibility for their own learning means that students annotate, correct and add further details to marked work. This work is then used as a resource both for subsequent work and revision. Students not attaining the highest grades do not add as much detail and would benefit from more detailed marking which gave specific advice on how they can raise the level of their work.

68. The students learn very well, discussing in pairs and groups to clarify their understanding of topics. Attitudes are excellent; students are very attentive and respond well to the teaching. They rise to the challenge and support each other when discussing difficult ideas, using discussion well to clarify their understanding. The quantity and quality of the work in the folders is very high and students take great pride in their work and keep it well organised. The excellent relationships between the students and staff contribute significantly to the very stimulating learning environment.

69. Leadership and management of biology are excellent. The head of department has been in post only since September 2001 and already has a clear vision for developing the subject further. There is close integration with the science department and this ensures consistent demands on the students. The work of the newly qualified teacher is well monitored and supported independently, while the head of science formerly monitors teaching of the whole science department. The procedures for assessing the students' work are excellent, and the students appreciate the way in which they are encouraged to achieve well and are closely monitored and supported. Careful analysis of examination results and students' progress in individual units of work has resulted in beneficial modifications in teaching. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

## Chemistry

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is **excellent**.

Strengths
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- Very high results, with those of 2001 in the top five per cent nationally
  - Very good teaching that enables students to understand and apply difficult concepts and principles
  - Excellent attitudes and relationships that enable students to enjoy and respond effectively to the intellectual challenge of chemistry
  - Very good use of data to analyse and provide for students' needs
  - Excellent leadership and management
- Areas for improvement
- Insufficient use of ICT to support and extend learning

70. Students in Year 12 are achieving very high standards. They were able to recall and explain accurately trends in physical properties of the halogens. They used their knowledge to explain the reactions of chlorine they had observed and to deduce balanced equations from their observations. They were able to predict reactions. Students can tackle a variety of calculations, for example involving redox potentials. Their written work, which is very accurate, is largely in note form and calculations.

71. The A-level results in 2001 were in the top five per cent of all schools. All students who took the examination passed and the percentage gaining an A and B grade was very high. In relation to their GCSE grades, students are achieving very well.

72. The standards of work of current Year 13 students are well above average. Students are achieving very well in relation to their GCSE results, 69 per cent having gained an A or B grade in the 2001 AS-level examination. In the lessons seen, they responded very well to the very good teaching, which probed their understanding of transition metal chemistry and the mechanisms of organic reactions. In a lesson revising aromatic chemistry, students demonstrated their understanding of electrophilic and nucleophilic substitution mechanisms.

73. Teaching is very good and students learn very well as a result. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to plan lessons that make difficult concepts readily accessible to students. They have exceptionally high expectations of their students' abilities to handle a wide range of learning materials and technical vocabulary. The students respond with enthusiasm and intense commitment. In a lesson on the analysis of Aspirin tablets, students made a substantial intellectual effort to bring together their knowledge of various organic functional groups in order to understand the process. The teacher was very good at ensuring that all students were included in the discussion and that they felt supported as they struggled with challenging ideas.

74. Students learn very well. They have excellent attitudes and are keen and enthusiastic learners. They enjoy studying Chemistry. Much of the written work is in the form of notes or answers to structured questions, or calculations. The exception is when students produce investigations. These allow students the opportunity to plan their own work as a problem-solving task. Corrections to written work are followed up in class or in extra lunchtime sessions. Students are all made fully aware of the standard of their work and how they may improve it.

75. Students work very hard independently. They are encouraged to use the Internet as a learning tool and are provided with a good textbook and a series of CD ROMs to support learning. The current lack of a sixth form library limits the availability of books. However, the department compensates for this by providing a supply of books and journals to assist students. Students sometimes prepare presentations for the class, and the department encourages the development of independent study skills. Many opportunities are made available to the students beyond the curriculum, such as visits to the Royal Institute of Chemistry, work experience in local hospitals and firms, and conferences on

different aspects of science, including career opportunities. Students respond well to these enrichment opportunities.

76. The very good teaching and learning result from the excellent management of the head of department. He provides a clear vision for the development of the subject. There is a strong team commitment to enabling the students to achieve very well. Teachers are enthusiastic and transmit this well to their students. The team uses data from assessment effectively to guide curriculum planning. Useful induction periods at the start of AS-level and A-level helps students appreciate the nature of the courses and acclimatise themselves to the demands of the work. Students who come from other schools are well supported in their learning. They said that their induction into the sixth form course was excellent and they had settled quickly into the school.

## Physics

The quality of provision in physics is **excellent**.

### Strengths

- Well above average A-level results, with three-quarters of the grades at A and B in 2001
- Very good teaching that results in very effective learning
- Exceptionally positive and hard working students, with a great will to succeed
- Excellent focus on examination requirements whilst maintaining a balance in teaching physics in an interesting manner
- Excellent regime of support, with many very useful tests that identify strengths and weaknesses in students' learning

### Areas for development

- Insufficient use of ICT in lessons
- Try to increase the proportion of A-level physics lessons that take place in laboratories, rather than classrooms

77. A-level results in 2001 were well above national averages and much higher than in 2000 and 1999. The proportion of top grades increased markedly in 2001 and all candidates passed. Many more male students than females take the subject, and both genders did well in 2001. Pupils from a great range of backgrounds study physics A-level, reflecting the diversity within the school, and they all do equally well. Physics results in 2001 were amongst the highest in the school. Results were about half a grade higher than expected, considering the grades students taking physics achieved in their other subjects.

78. Current standards in Years 12 and 13 are also well above average and students achievements are very good. In a Year 13 revision lesson preparing for the synoptic paper, the students had good recall of a range of formulae and ideas concerning forces, as they worked in pairs constructing a concept map. Where students found they had difficulty defining a term, such as 'gravitational field strength', the discussions that followed invariably enlightened them. All students were equally involved in the lesson and achieved similarly high standards.

79. Year 12 students, considering the short time they have been following the course, are achieving very well indeed. In a lesson concerning the application of potential dividers, calculations were accurately completed and the applications of the device emphasised. The lesson went on to look at internal resistance, and again relevance was emphasised. Work on distinguishing between maximum power output and maximising efficiency was particularly demanding and ensured that the most capable

physicists were fully stretched. Lower-attaining students struggled with the numerical aspects of this work, but achieved a good clear overall picture because explanations were geared to their needs. Students of all levels of attainment were given equal and appropriate attention and achieved similarly well.

80. Pupils' work seen shows a methodical, sequential approach to physics, with a strong emphasis on developing a good mathematical understanding of the subject. From definitions, students move on to explanations, and finally applications. All students' files were well presented and had detailed helpful notes as well as past paper questions. The work shows that students and teachers expectations are very high, with a very good focus on examination board requirements. Few examples of the use of ICT were apparent in pupils' work and discussions with students indicate that, although all are competent computer users, they do not use them very often in physics lessons.

81. The teaching seen was very good, reflecting the high quality apparent in the students' files. High expectations, a rigorous mathematical approach, and very good teacher subject knowledge – apparent in the use made of physics vocabulary, and background information and applications of physics - combine to ensure very effective learning by the students. Lessons are well structured, with good 'beginnings, middles and ends'. For example, the Year 12 lesson referred to started with a rigorous review of homework problems, the start of the next topic delayed until misunderstandings and difficulties were resolved. In the Year 13 lesson on forces, a demanding question was set at the end of the lesson to test understanding and to ensure that students could apply what had been taught. Marking is regular, but few constructive comments are written on pupils' work, and recording in markbooks is too variable. The testing regime, however, is rigorous and excellent. Frequent short tests and more substantial topic tests ensure that the students and teachers know what has been taught and learnt well, and what has not. Where test results are too low, students are expected to continue retaking the tests until they reach a sufficiently high standard. The onus is placed on the student to retake the test and to contact staff for help. Teaching staff make themselves readily available and most students make every effort to follow this procedure. This is excellent practice and key to the examination success of the students.

82. Students work extremely hard, are very well motivated and want to succeed. They co-operate together in lessons most effectively, using time efficiently. Relationships with staff are good with the result that most students are confident learners who question teachers when they do not understand. The students have positive attitudes to physics because they enjoy the high quality teaching. Physics is much less popular than the other sciences, however, and the challenge remains for the department to enable students to see that physics is an enjoyable and worthwhile A-level option.

83. The department is very well led. Great improvements have been made in recent years, and, as a result, A-level grades have improved substantially. The department resource files are excellent, showing a clear curriculum route, including greater use of the school's ICT facilities. Assessment is rigorous and very helpful to the students. Resources are satisfactory, but accommodation is a problem. A number of physics lessons take place in classrooms which restricts what can be carried out. For example, demonstrations that would aid students understanding have to be delayed until the teacher can return to a laboratory. Although monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning takes place within the science department, lesson observation of one physicist by another does not, which wastes the opportunity to share good practice.

## **DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **very good**.



#### Strengths

- Students' achievement in class and in examinations
- Very good teaching, particularly subject knowledge, pace and challenge, leading to very good learning.
- Students' abilities to apply their knowledge and techniques in practical situations.
- Students' excellent attitudes, which encourage them to work hard and achieve very well.
- Very good leadership and management.

#### Areas for improvement

- The depth and range of students' initial researches in design projects

84. The most recent A-level examination results were average, and below those of previous years. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade with a significant proportion gaining the higher grades. The department experienced some staffing difficulties during the year. This had an impact on results, with some students failing to gain the highest grade by a very few marks. Almost all students completed the course, and overall girls performed better than boys. The 2001 AS-level results gained by Year 12 students were in line with those expected, and a significant proportion of students gained the highest grades.

85. Current standards for Year 12 and 13 students are well above average and well above those expected in almost all elements of both the AS and A-level courses. Students are achieving very well. In the lessons observed in both year groups, teachers had high expectations, both of the amount and quality of work to be completed. Teachers used exemplar materials to good effect to illustrate the standard of work required. These factors enabled students to make very good progress. In a Year 13 lesson, students were able to use their knowledge of processes and materials effectively and work with a good degree of independence, for example when considering properties of materials and their suitability for use in prototypes. In Year 12, students showed a good understanding of the need to develop models of their design ideas. When using these effectively to present their ideas to the class, students showed a good understanding of specialist vocabulary, components and materials.

86. In both year groups, students' coursework projects indicate that their skills when researching and analysing information are very good. Students use a wide range of sources for information and prepare detailed specifications before designing. They make effective use of computers, for applications such as word processing, data handling and graphics. Coursework projects are very well presented and they use a good range of formal drawing techniques, such as orthographic projection. They are adventurous and creative when embarking on design projects, such as designing aids for the disabled, and considering environmental issues and linking these to recycling within the home. Evaluation of their work is thoughtful and thorough. This has a positive impact on the standards they attain. However, elements of their design work are weaker. Students often do not initially explore a wide enough range of ideas in sufficient depth or develop and modify their designs sufficiently in their projects.

87. Teaching and learning observed were very good. Particular strengths in teaching are teachers' very good subject expertise, detailed planning and enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers clearly explain what has to be completed together with the preparation that is required from students for subsequent lessons. In a Year 12 lesson, the teacher skilfully ensured all members of the group became involved in the presentations made. Students were encouraged to talk about their design proposals but were asked to justify their design decisions by the teacher. Those watching the presentations were encouraged to give their evaluations and suggest possible improvements. The teacher ensured students used appropriate specialist vocabulary for materials and techniques. This led to students making very good learning gains.

88. The marking of students work is regular and detailed. Marking is linked effectively to examination criteria and students are given detailed guidance on how to improve their work. Very good feedback

and guidance are given in lessons and this enables students to make very good learning gains. Students show good levels of independence in their learning. The quality of their work shows that they spend considerable amounts of time outside school completing assignments and this has a positive impact on standards achieved. In lessons, students' attitudes are very positive. They respect the views of others, are caring and mature and consistently work hard.

89. The subject is very well led and managed and this has led to high standards at AS and A-level. Teachers work well as a team and show a very high level of commitment. There is a clear understanding of the strengths within the department, together with a clear view of improvements that need to be made. For example, staff have recognised the need to use computer-aided design programs to improve students' development and presentation of design ideas. Assessment procedures are very effective in identifying strengths and weaknesses of each student. This is having a positive impact on standards. Overall, resources within the department are good and good quality technical support helps the department to function effectively.

### **Business studies**

Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **very good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Teachers' excellent knowledge of business and industry, and their very good lesson planning
- Very high standards at AS and A-level
- Teachers' very caring and supportive relationships with students
- Students' very good attitudes leading to very good progress and achievement

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Insufficient use of ICT
- Too little use of work placements to enrich learning at A-level
- Lack of detail in some students' termly targets

90. Courses currently run are AS- and A-level business studies, accounting, law, and economics, all at advanced level. There is a GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) intermediate business course from which students can progress on to AS-level. (See short reports on accounting and economics elsewhere.)

91. Overall standards in lessons and work seen at AS and A-level are above average, building on very good achievement at GCSE, where pass rates are above the national average for boys and well above for girls. A-level results were above the national average for the top grades of A and B in 2000, and all students passed. In 2001, the proportion of top grades was lower but this was in line with other school subjects. Results were above the national average for the top grades of A and B. Results in the new AS-level examination were very encouraging, with the percentage of grades A and B above school and national averages. Female students' achievement related to their attainment on entry to AS courses was very good in 2001 and male students' was good. The quality of male students' course and homework is less than females', but males perform equally well and sometimes better in examinations.

92. Students on the new one-year intermediate level GNVQ business course are achieving well and are likely to obtain merit grades in 2002, above national expectations. When account is taken of the students' GCSE grades at the start of the course, their overall achievement is good. Overall standards in A-level business have shown very good improvement since the last inspection where they were

satisfactory. An increasing number of students have joined the sixth form from other schools, and make up about half of all classes.

93. Standards in lessons and the written work of current Year 12 AS-level students are above average overall for male and female students, and in line with national expectations at this stage. The oral skills of over a third of students are above average. The achievement of current intermediate GNVQ students is good and sometimes very good. No GNVQ lessons were seen. In a very good AS-level lesson, students made brisk progress in learning about the implications of theories of motivation for businesses of different types. Several students gave appropriate examples from their part-time jobs to illustrate 'good' and 'bad' motivating factors. Course work notes are well organised and neat, particularly from girls, and students define key terms such as elasticity well.

94. Students in Year 13 make very good progress in lessons. Work seen was above average except for limited use of ICT to present work and solve business problems in lessons. ICT was not used enough to set up spreadsheet models of costs and profits in cash flow and break-even charts. However, the highest-attaining students used ICT well to draw clear, well-labelled graphs showing the frequency of different promotional techniques used by a jeans manufacturer, and the majority of students provided useful SWOT analyses of firms' marketing positions. In a very good Year 13 lesson, students showed very good critical understanding of marketing strategies during their group feedbacks, and in another good lesson showed an acceptable amount of detail in their coursework projects, which were generally well researched from Internet data. A large minority of students had not, yet focused their projects sufficiently by determining appropriate titles or by using sufficient evidence from visits and work experience to enrich their analyses. A relatively small number found some difficulty with the interpretation and analysis of numerical and statistical data.

95. The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good in lessons seen. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when teaching was satisfactory. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge underpinned enthusiastic class discussions, and lessons had clear aims and good pace. In a very good AS lesson the teacher asked well-focused questions to consolidate previous learning on organisation charts and introduced a new topic on motivation by getting students who had taken GCSE to recall and explain key concepts. Students' very keen responses helped them to develop good critical understanding of the consequences of poor motivation in different businesses. The teacher's excellent application of Maslow's hierarchy of needs to the volcano disaster in the Congo provided an opportunity for students to engage in animated and constructive discussion, through which they reinforced key concepts very well. Lessons had a good mix of activities combining individual and paired work. Computers were only used for Year 13 projects and no group work presentations were seen in the sampled lessons. Generally, over time, teachers help students develop very good key skills of communications, number and ICT, as well as problem solving and team working. Teachers' very good, supportive relationships with students, whose interest and enthusiasm for the subject are cemented by school trips to New York and other business centres.

96. Students work very well together both individually and in pairs to complete their tasks and show mature attitudes in discussion. Students of all ethnic groups work very well together. In lessons seen, students showed a very good capacity to work independently, bringing in relevant research, for example, from web sites. Teachers' good practice, which they could usefully share more, involves asking students to prepare and teach a lesson themselves, and then, occasionally to mark each other's work. Overall, students' response is very good.

97. Assessment procedures are closely linked to examination requirements. Marking is thorough, constructive and regular, and written targets in case studies help students improve. Termly work reports help students to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses well, although some targets

teachers give are not detailed enough to encourage students to improve specific aspects of knowledge or skill. Students' progress is very well monitored, with their performance continually measured against predicted grades.

98. Leadership and management of business courses are excellent, and a very clear sense of direction is shown by the well-planned introduction of the new GNVQ, AS and A-level courses at a time when there were several major staff changes. Schemes of work fully meet examination requirements, and the department's progress in meeting school improvement targets is very good. Intermediate GNVQ assignments incorporate key skills of communication, numeracy and information technology very well. The department's overall improvement since the last inspection has been very good. It is well placed to improve further students' achievement in business studies.

### **Economics**

99. Standards in economics are good in lessons and work seen. Results in the A-level examinations were above the national average for girls and boys in 2000 though below the school average, and in 2001 they were below average. Results were adversely affected by changes in teaching staff. Staffing is more stable now and the school expects results in 2002 to be higher, and above average again. Teaching and learning in the lesson seen was very good. Students developed a good knowledge and understanding of investment appraisal. The course is very well organised and the teachers involved have excellent subject expertise. Individual students are very well monitored, and their class and homework essays are regularly and constructively marked to help them improve. ICT (information and communications technology) is not yet used sufficiently as a tool to model economic problems using spreadsheets or to develop statistical skills.

### **Accounting**

100. Accounting is one of the school's strongest subjects. In 2000, seven of the 14 students gained grade A. In 2001, results were lower, being below both the school average and national expectations because a teacher left during the year, and a new AS-level module required students to prepare ledgers and final accounts, which was not previously required. In the two lessons seen students, made good progress as a result of very good teaching. Individual students are well monitored by termly progress reports based on their target grades. Students' calculations of payback on investments are accurate, showing a good standard of number skills, and they have a good understanding of why and how firms maximise returns on initial capital.

### **Information and communication technology**

101. Scrutiny of students' work and documentation for A-level ICT indicate that the provision is excellent. The course organisation, notes and guidance are outstanding. The students are very keen, producing very thorough written work and applying their knowledge and skills well in a range of interesting projects. In a very good Year 12 lesson, the students made 'powerpoint' presentations demonstrating what they had learned. The teacher expertly extended their learning, for example with a sharp focus on definitions, and reinforced independent research skills by drawing on the students' wider reading. In 2001, the results at A-level were above the national average, and the number of students involved has significantly increased in each of the last two years.

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

### **Art and design**

The quality of provision in art and design is **very good**.

Strengths
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- Examinations results that are well above average, and students' very good achievement
- The high level of critical analysis in some students' work
- Students' high levels of motivation and excellent attitudes to learning
- Teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject
- The subject makes a strong contribution to students' spiritual and cultural development.

#### Areas for improvement

- The use of questioning students and involving them all in extended explanations
- Opportunities to use ICT

102. Art and design results are the combined results of A-level examinations in textiles, graphics and fine art. Some students have taken more than one examination in addition to fine art. The trend in attainment shows that in recent years standards in A-level examinations have been consistently well above average. Prior to 2001, well over half the entry attained a grade A. In 2001, the percentage was a just below half but the average point score remained very high compared with the national average. All students gained A to E grades. Male students have consistently attained the higher grades although there are fewer male students compared to female students. In 2001, females outnumbered the males by four to one. Results in 2001 showed that all but two students achieved beyond their predicted minimum grade, calculated on the basis of their prior attainment. The majority equalled or bettered their performance in other subjects. The overall results indicate very good achievement in relation to students' starting points in the sixth form. A significant proportion of students attained the A and B grades in AS-level examinations in 2001. Some students achieved very well indeed and a very high proportion did better than predicted.

103. Standards of work by students currently in Year 13 are similar to previous years, that is well above average. The sample of work provided by the school and the work seen in lessons show very good achievement by individual students, including a small number with learning difficulties who are making very good progress. Most are on track to exceed their targets. There are no significant differences in the achievements of female and male students. Very high standards of literacy, and analytical and critical thinking underpin students' written and practical work. When higher-attaining students' talk about their work they demonstrate very high levels of intellectual curiosity. Their ability to reflect and to argue convincingly, for example why their work is taking a particular direction, frequently goes far beyond the written accounts of their decision-making. Standards of mixed media work, creative problem solving and experimentation are a particular strength of the department. The work by Year 13 students is characterised by the variety of styles and individual responses to the set tasks.

104. Students join the sixth form with above average GCSE results, but some are unsure how to begin to analyse works of art. In one Year 12 lesson, students first gave simplistic explanations and interpretations of artists' work but when the teacher challenged them they began to look more deeply and discovered other explanations and meanings that they had overlooked. In another lesson, students demonstrated how they were becoming more knowledgeable and able to apply their theoretical understanding of colour to aspects of their practical work. In both lessons, although students made significant gains in knowledge and understanding, they did not express themselves confidently and the boys in particular were reluctant to take an active role in discussion.

105. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and expertise and have extremely high expectations of students. A feature of the very good teaching is the use teachers make of assessment data to track the progress of individuals and provide the basis for high-quality work reviews. These are most effective where the teacher asks searching questions and where a dialogue is established. The relationships that exist between teachers and students are very supportive and help to create the excellent attitudes and commitment of students to their work. Visits

to galleries and to national and international centres foster enthusiasm for learning. Teachers are experienced and have a good range of specialist skills, and this leads to some very effective overlapping of disciplines. For example teachers sometimes use printing techniques in painting and as a basis for manipulating images on computers. The teaching seen during the week of the inspection was very strong and lesson plans made appropriate reference to the examination units and marking criteria. Individual and whole-class teaching was generally very effective and worked best where objectives were sharp and clearly explained, the timed tasks set a challenging pace and there was sufficient time at the end of the lesson to review the learning. Students progressively acquire the necessary skills for achieving very good standards and they gradually develop the confidence to work independently. The use of questioning students and involving them all in extended explanations is under-developed at present, and opportunities for using ICT are limited.

106. The management of the subject is very good. High standards in examinations have been maintained and there has been very good improvement since the last inspection. There is very effective teamwork and a commitment by all staff to continue to improve what is already a very successful department. Sharing ideas and observing one another teach, as well as monitoring the work of students taught by different teachers, needs to become a higher priority in developing the teaching further. Book provision in the library and in the department is good. The department is ably supported by a technician who helps in the day-to-day work of the department and in exhibiting students' work in the school. The artwork displayed around the school promotes art well as an intellectually stimulating and challenging discipline and makes a positive contribution to the working environment.

### Media studies

Overall, the quality of provision in media studies is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Students' very good learning, particularly through applying theory to practical work
- Students' very good attitudes and their very effective co-operation in groups
- Very good teaching, based on very good planning for a good range of activities that stimulates students' curiosity and challenges them to think analytically
- Very good leadership and management, with good sharing of effective teaching methods

#### Areas for improvement

- Cramped accommodation limits small-group discussions and practical presentations in Year 12

107. Attainment in media studies has significantly risen recently. Results at A-level have risen to match national averages for the subject overall. All students have obtained a pass grade over the last three years. The proportion gaining higher grades has risen, although it is less than half that achieved in the subject nationally. At the end of the first year, A-S level results exceeded the national average.

108. Evidence seen during the inspection confirms that standards are continuing to improve. Students' current very good achievement and learning are particularly evident in their written work. Here, they define and use well specialist terms, such as 'mise en scene', and apply them successfully, with thought and insight, to a very wide range of practical examples of newspapers television programmes and films selected for study. For example, one higher-attaining student produced a detailed analysis of the television programme 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire?', explaining clearly how features, such as the role of the presenter, scheduling decisions, methods of engaging the audience, and control of atmosphere, all contribute to the show's popularity. In class, students discuss, analyse and make presentations about film technique fluently. They apply very effectively and independently, their knowledge of film conventions, genres and techniques to extracts they have chosen. They make very

good use of this knowledge in projects, such as documentary film making, or designing and constructing a website. In the process, they make choices and justify them rationally in response to well-focused teacher questioning. This is very effective in assisting students to generate original ideas, and to develop them in practical projects with care and self-discipline.

109. The quality of teaching is very good. It is characterised by very good subject knowledge and very good awareness of what individual students know and can do. Questioning is incisive, and well matched to students' levels of interest and understanding, so that they are encouraged to study independently and to think beyond their initial perceptions. This approach is greatly appreciated by students, as is the quality of assessment of their written work, the arrangements made for introducing them to the course, and the regular opportunities to discuss with teachers the progress of their work. Teachers mark written work consistently with helpful and precise comments, which enable students to know how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve, and this helps secure a very good rate of learning.

110. Computers are effectively used to give students a good knowledge of the use of information technology in modern communications; some students complete successful extended projects using new technology. However, the library lacks the range of reference books and background reading to promote independent study at this level. Students who speak English as an additional language make progress in line with their peers, and male and female student' progress and attainment are similar. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good, and learning is greatly enhanced by the way in which they are prepared to discuss ideas and learn together in small groups, or to evaluate each others' presentations with the whole class. In this way, they share ideas, and challenge each other supportively to achieve well. Teachers and students share a sense of seriousness and enjoyment in the subject, so that all students feel able to extend their learning by make active contributions to lessons.

111. Media studies is very well led by the teacher in charge of the subject. To support colleagues, well-planned and detailed lesson notes and background information prescribe a good variety of methods and approaches which hold students' interest very well. They ensure that students gain experience of a good range of media, exploiting the foundation provided by their own experience of television and newspapers, and challenging them to move towards a deeper appreciation and understanding of cinema, television, practical film-making and web-based activities. A weakness is that some accommodation is too cramped to allow discussion work and film analysis from video extracts to be conducted properly, particularly in Year 12. The control and issue of specialist video equipment takes up valuable time, which should be spent on practical work.

## Music

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teachers' good range of advanced performing skills
- Good relationships between teachers and students enhancing the quality of learning
- Projects closely reflect students' musical aptitudes and interests

### Areas for improvement

- Underdeveloped research skills and students' vague general musical knowledge
- Under-use of assessment and review in lessons to enable teachers to check more exactly what knowledge and understanding students are acquiring

112. Numbers taking music in the sixth form in recent years have been small and meaningful comparisons with national results cannot be therefore be made. Results at A-level and AS-level have been in line with the school's expectations of the students. All passed, but few gained the highest grade.

113. Current standards in Year 12 are in line with what is expected, while, in Year 13, current standards are above average. In both years, students are achieving well in class and their musical understanding is being continually developed through their activities as proficient and in some cases advanced instrumentalists in the school and elsewhere. In both years, students are able to use computers competently to aid their composing. They compose, orchestrate and layer their ideas confidently and efficiently on computers and have well developed skills in evaluating and refining their work. This was clear in a Year 13 lesson, where a student composed a song for countertenor and experimented successfully to achieve a suitable orchestral texture for an accompaniment. In general, students have a very good understanding of the range and characteristics of their chosen medium for composition. They have a good working knowledge of technicalities such as sequence, and they understand the value of a repeated motif in unifying a piece and of the opportunities for contrast offered by the effective use of various musical structures. Students' knowledge of musical forms and eras is vague. They do not have a secure enough knowledge of, for example, the major characteristics of baroque music to enable them to analyse music they hear with confidence.

114. Teaching and learning were good overall in lessons observed. Teachers have well developed performance skills. They communicate their enthusiasm well and relationships with students are very good. Students are able to develop their own musical strengths and interests to good effect in interesting and carefully chosen projects. Students receive much individual help, particularly with composing. Teachers give advice thoughtfully to enable students to make good progress while encouraging them to work with independence and make their own creative judgements. In Year 12, students of varying levels of accomplishment were able to make good progress in composing variations on Beethoven's 'Hymn of Joy' because the assistance provided was carefully matched to the needs of each student. Where pupils encountered factual knowledge in a lesson, however, there was too little formal marshalling of information to help their learning, for example by using the white-board, and insufficient consolidation at the end of the lesson to check what had been absorbed.

115. The subject is enthusiastically led and well organised. Sixth form students are able to supplement their formal course by taking part in a good range of extra-curricular activities in the school. These can include widening their experiences through assisting with the directing of ensembles such as the wind band. The head of department supports and guides colleagues well, and has thereby reduced the impact of recent unexpected staff changes. The very high standard of resources, particularly for ICT, has a positive impact on the standards that students attain, as does the excellent accommodation. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## HUMANITIES

### Critical thinking skills

Overall, the quality of provision in critical thinking skills is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good. Teachers plan activities well and this helps students learn effectively.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards their studies and this helps them achieve well.

#### Areas for improvement

- Results are not yet as high as they should be on this new course.

116. This subject was examined for the first time at AS-level in 2001. The results gained by Year 12 students were disappointing and below those expected. Some detailed information relating to the examination syllabus was not available until part way through the course. This factor resulted in some aspects of work not being linked sufficiently to the examination syllabus. Thorough analysis of the



results has been carried out and appropriate action taken to modify the scheme of work so that it fully meets the examination requirements.

117. Current standards of Year 12 students show improvement on those of last year and are above average, and students are achieving well. In the lessons observed teachers had high expectations of the amount and quality of work to be completed. Tasks were both demanding and interesting. In a Year 12 lesson, students understood the need to be objective in argument and identify flaws such as false logic, incomplete evidence and prejudice in arguments, which lead to erroneous conclusions. Students use a wide range of sources for information and are developing fluent debating skills.

118. Teaching and learning observed were good. Particular strengths in teaching are teachers' very good subject expertise, detailed planning and enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers clearly explain what has to be completed together with the preparation that is required from students for subsequent lessons. These features were exemplified in a lesson, where the teacher's lively approach and very good questioning successfully involved all members of the group. The teacher skilfully drew their ideas together and provided considerable encouragement and praise. This enabled all students to both make a contribution and learn from the activity. The marking of students work is both regular and thorough. Marking is linked effectively to examination marking criteria and students are given detailed guidance on how to improve aspects of their work.

119. Very good informal feedback and guidance is given in lessons and this enables students to make very good learning gains. Students show good levels of independence in their learning. The quality of their work shows that they spend considerable amounts of time outside of school completing assignments and this has a positive impact on standards achieved. In lessons students' attitudes are very positive. They show respect for each other, and all adults, and seek and value the views of others in the group.

120. Staff have a clear view of the improvements that need to be made. For example, appropriate action has been taken to improve standards with modifications to the scheme of work. Management of the new course is good and there has been a constructive and immediate response to previous deficiencies so that provision is now good.

### **Geography**

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good; teachers have good knowledge of the subject; lessons are well planned and resourced
- Students are fully engaged and challenged appropriately
- Students' attitudes are excellent, they are well motivated, read widely and research beyond the set texts; the additional information is shared in lessons and enriches discussion

#### Areas for improvement

- Ensure consistency in marking so that students know how to improve their work still further
- Seek to increase numbers of students following the course

121. The provision for geography includes an AS-level course in Year 12. Most students then continue to study on the A-level course in Year 13. At present there are very small numbers of students on both courses, despite the success of geography as a GCSE subject. In 2000 – 2001 nine students successfully followed the AS course, but only five continued to take the A2 course. Several of these students joined the sixth form from other schools at the beginning of Year 12.

122. Standards overall are average, but the indication is that they are rising. The most recent GCE A-level results were average and the AS-level results in 2001 were just above the national average. Care needs to be taken when comparing results because of the very small number of students in each cohort. The observation of students in lessons and evidence from a scrutiny of their written work confirm that the standards achieved by students on the AS and A-level courses are above average. The students show good knowledge of the topics in both the Global Challenge (physical) and Global Futures (human) aspects of geography. They are confident in expressing their understanding and opinions because they have collected information from a good range of sources. Some of these are given to them and others they have collected from wider reading or independent research. Their work indicates an effective use of the Internet to gather information and that they make sound judgements interpreting this and data gathered from practical and fieldwork. Students on the A-level course use case studies and models confidently to present reasoned arguments about the differences between More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCS) and Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs). The discussion and questioning observed in the session about aid for LEDCs and the issues of debt were very good.

123. Overall, teaching is good. Lessons are well planned. The teachers effectively use a combination of exposition, questioning and discussion. They draw upon the resources in the form of texts, ICT, the students' existing knowledge and research findings very well to extend understanding and identify challenging issues. Both teachers have very good subject knowledge. This is evident in the way they present lessons, monitor learning and constantly demonstrate how students can improve their achievements. In an AS-level lesson concerned with managing transport in cities, the teacher skilfully combined the course handouts, with Internet material, the students own reading and research and high quality discussion to develop students ideas and questions. The small numbers of students means that the opportunities for work in paired activities has to be limited. As a result, the teachers have to work harder and to draw upon the excellent relationships with students to promote and maintain structured discussions. Students' work is marked regularly and usually this includes an evaluative comment on the quality of the work. The best marking not only provides a clear and accurate judgement about the quality of the work but also provides guidance on how the student might make improvements.

124. Students learn well. They are keen and interested in the subject and respond well to the good teaching. In discussions most students talk with confidence about the aspects of the course they have studied. Many students read and research topics independently and this is evident in discussions when they offer comments and sometimes express challenging opinions that enhance the quality of debate.

125. Geography is led and managed well. Teaching of the various topics and themes is divided to make best use of teachers' strengths and interests. Resources are satisfactory but the up-to-date case studies and constant research by teachers to produce additional and relevant material contributes significantly to teaching and learning. The regular use of ICT and the resources of the school library are also important factors that enrich learning. The library holds a good range of newspapers, periodicals and journals and students are effectively taught to use this resource for both prescribed tasks and independent research.

## History

The quality of provision for A-level history is **very good**.

### Strengths

- A-level results are well above the national average
- Teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm
- High quality marking which tells students how to improve
- The development by students of very good analytical skills
- Highly motivated students

#### Areas for improvement

- Not all students contribute enough to discussion
- Work occasionally not closely enough matched to needs of lower-attaining students

126. Since the last inspection, A-level history students have continued to achieve results which are well above the national average. Girls have achieved slightly higher results than boys. Compared with the grades students attained in their other subjects, the history results in 2001 were not quite as good, but this has varied from year to year and, in general, history results have been on a par with other subjects.

127. The standards observed during the inspection were above average in the Year 13 A-level course, with a few pupils working at a well above average standard. On the AS course in Year 12 the attainment was well above average. In both year groups pupils are achieving well relative to their starting point. The difference reflects a difference in potential between the two year groups.

128. In Year 13, the students' work showed a thorough approach and a good attention to detail. The highest attaining students were able to analyse and synthesise information effectively to identify the most significant factors. This was evident in their work on summarising key events and issues from the Thatcher governments from 1979 – 1990. The other students were more descriptive and less analytical in their approach, though still working at an above average level. In Year 12, most students showed a real flair for the subject and were using their knowledge and skills to make good connections between different topics. For example in a lesson on Cold War conflicts, one group identified common factors in a number of areas which led to Superpower rivalry.

129. The standard of teaching is very good overall. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and a real enthusiasm for their subject. They prepare lessons well using a variety of approaches and resources, including the regular and discriminating use of information and communication technology. As a result of this students are developing good analytical skills and learning to apply their historical knowledge and skills to real issues. Teachers mark work very well giving students good guidance on both what they need to do to improve their work and what is expected in work at this level. Teachers track students' progress carefully and review target grades as appropriate. The only relative weaknesses in teaching were that on occasion, the way in which groups were organised for discussion did not encourage the less confident students to contribute. Similarly a few of the relatively lower-attaining students occasionally needed more direct support and work more carefully matched to their particular needs.

130. The head of department is relatively new and recognises that he has taken over a flourishing department. He is aware of its strengths and is keen to see that standards are maintained and where possible improved. He has sensible plans for development.

#### Sociology

Overall, the quality of provision in sociology is **excellent**.

#### Strengths

- Standards in examinations are consistently well above average and students' achieve very well
- Teaching and learning are very good; a good range of teaching methods stimulates very effective learning
- Students' very good application of different perspectives to their work
- Students' attitudes and enthusiasm, and the support they receive from staff
- Very good leadership and management

#### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for using ICT

131. A-level and AS-level results were well above average in 2001, with a very high proportion of students gaining A and B grades. Since 1998, results have remained above the national average. The overall work observed in Years 12 and 13 is well above the standard expected. Pupils achieve very well and at least one gifted and talented student is at graduate level.

132. Year 12 students have made a very good start on their AS-level course. Already students can identify important concepts concerning the media. For example, they understand the influence of politics, bias and the conflict between the needs of the popular press to sell newspapers by manipulating, exploiting and exaggerating stories, to gain sales, and the possibility of conditioning society against presentation of the actual facts. Students are developing impressive critical skills. They explore the norms and values of society to identify the reasons for biased reporting as compared to the independence of the BBC and the political criticism and pressure that result from political interference and involvement. Students are able to apply this thinking to contemporary and historic issues, for example reporting on Afghanistan and the Falklands at the time of Argentina's incursion. Current achievement is very good because of the challenging teaching.

133. Year 13 students have an exceptional understanding of theorists and differing perspectives and apply these confidently to addressing present day issues, making well-informed hypotheses for discussion with other students or arguments in set pieces of work. They are able to describe and discuss in detail different perspectives, using their very good knowledge of underlying principles of studies. This excellent knowledge of studies and their correct application to different aspects of sociology is a particular strength of Year 13 sociology students. Students are very competent at organising essays and understand the value of planning and research. They carefully analyse appropriate material which links significantly with the requirements of the question. High attaining students are particularly adept at identifying key words in essay titles so that the issues raised may be specifically addressed. These students know where extra marks may be gained by this scientific application of knowledge. Lower-attaining students, who nevertheless are working above average standards, do not make the same very compelling links between theorists, perspectives and aspects of society.

134. The teaching of sociology is very good. Teachers have a very good understanding of the subject and this enables them to use a variety of teaching methods which rigorously challenge students. For example, students in Year 12 gave presentations for further discussion about contemporary and historic events so that students saw the relevance of the application of principles and theories across a raft of issues. Marking is closely linked with AS and A-level grading and teacher comments assist understanding. Teachers are adept at prompting students' learning by very good questioning. They extend students' thinking very well, taking care to involve all members of the group. This very good teaching promotes very good learning and students are keen to extend their knowledge independently. They use supplementary information from books and periodicals, they research topics from their files and books, they obtain information from the Internet, and they are confident in gathering information to advance their learning and understanding. Access to ICT facilities is limited and this access time is mainly used for coursework.

135. Students' attitudes to the subject are excellent. Year 13 students feel that they have a good understanding of how society functions, especially the impact of different interest groups. Overall, students make very good progress.

136. The head of department provides very good leadership. Very good systems of monitoring students' progress enable teachers to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses. This guides

teaching, enabling teachers to prepare tasks that closely reflect students' individual needs. Very good, up-to-date resources are available, including the library provision. Students and teachers attend Update conferences. These opportunities give good insights into current developments in sociology and enrich the school's provision. As a result of excellent planning and attitudes the department has a very good capacity for further development.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

### **English literature**

Overall, the quality of provision in English literature is **excellent**.

#### Strengths

- The standard achieved at A-level is well above the national average
- Students learn very well and are very highly motivated
- Teaching is very good
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understand students' needs very well

#### Areas for improvement

- A wider range of resources to meet the demands of the new examinations

137. The standard achieved in A-level English literature 2000 was well above the national average. A-level results have improved each year since the last inspection and the number of students has increased. In the first year of the new AS literature examination, students reached high standards, and most are continuing in a second year to A-level. More female than male students take English literature and English language, and girls generally outperform boys.

138. Work seen in lessons and in course work folders confirms the high standards attained in English literature in both Years 12 and 13. Standards are well above average. Students are encouraged by their teachers to use a wide range of source material to investigate the broader context of their literature, and they make good use of the Internet in their research. By reading different interpretations, students learn not only to develop skills in structuring and presenting their own work well, but also gain confidence in making their own subjective judgements. A presentation of the poem, 'Twice' by Christina Rossetti, given by three Year 12 students was impressive in its detailed analysis and its sophisticated computer programmed delivery. By Year 13, students have developed an independent and confident critical voice. From a strong foundation of English at GCSE, and with good progress throughout the sixth form, their achievement in A-level literature is good.

139. Students of all abilities are very interested in their work and highly motivated to succeed. In response to the high expectations of the teachers, they work very hard both independently and in collaboration. Relationships are excellent. Girls outnumber boys in all groups and in many cases are more assertive and vocal. However, students in all English classes listen to and respect each other's views.

140. Teaching is very good. Teachers have an enthusiasm for and very good knowledge of their subject. They demonstrate good teaching skills, planning and organising lessons very well. Their very good use of targeted questioning helps to challenge students in their thinking. The pace of lessons is fast, and students learn quickly, rising to the challenge when asked to produce high quality work in a short space of time. Teachers understand the needs of their students very well.

141. English is taught in a suite of rooms, which enables resources to be conveniently stored and shared. A wider range of resources is needed to meet the demands of the new English examinations and to avoid heavy photocopying bills. The sixth form library is currently absorbed within a building

development programme, and space for sixth form books and study severely restricted in the main school library. The implementation of plans for a larger sixth form learning resource centre will offer students vital support in their independent learning.

142. The leadership and management of English are very good. Planning and marking are meticulous and individual student progress monitored rigorously. There is careful co-ordination of courses and development of themes. Participation in a national language conference is one of many enrichment activities available to students, which enhance their experience and broaden their understanding.

143. Since the last inspection, improvement has been very good, especially in standards of English literature, in the increase in students taking English courses and in the very good teaching. The capacity of the department to improve further is very good.

### **English language**

144. Results in the relatively new A-level English language examination have been low in comparison with those gained in literature. Only a small number of students followed the course in 2001. Results in the first year of the AS-level language examination showed an improvement. Lessons observed and work seen in English language A- and AS-levels indicates that standards are rising in response to very good teaching. A growing number of students are choosing this course, occasionally as an additional sixth form subject for one year only. Most students successfully employ linguistic concepts to analyse written and spoken English. However, others have trouble with linguistic theories and lack the required detailed knowledge of grammar. Some students require considerable guidance from teachers on scope and methodology in their independent language projects, but others produce projects of a good standard. One student based her investigation on the speech patterns and dialect of her visiting Guyanese grandmother, applying linguistic theories and explanations to transcripts of conversations she had recorded, with excellent results.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

Overall, the quality of provision in French is **very good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Above average attainment in Years 12 and 13
- Very good teaching; teachers' high expectations lead to very good progress
- Students are committed, enthusiastic and very keen to succeed
- Impressive work in writing and speaking by the highest-attaining students, and generally good listening and speaking skills
- Thorough assessment that leaves students clear about their strengths and weaknesses, and how to achieve their targets

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The accuracy of some students' writing and speaking
- The use of ICT

- The development of language-orientated visits abroad

145. The focus of the inspection was on French, but work in Spanish was also sampled. Spanish attracts fewer students than French. In Spanish, results in 1999-2001, when seven of the ten candidates achieved the higher grades A or B, were above the national average; in two of these years they were well above.

146. Over the last four years the numbers entered for French A-level have been quite low; current groups are larger. Results overall have been in line with the national average, as has the number of higher grades achieved. In each of the three earlier years, one student did not pass, but in 2001 all students achieved grades in the range A to D. This represents good improvement since the last inspection.

147. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files during the inspection indicates that standards are rising. Standards in Year 13 are now above the national average. Presentations given by students in class showed that most express themselves clearly in French, with intonation and pronunciation which are good and sometimes excellent. Most students are able to express an argument, giving evidence for their views. All students understand the gist of spoken or written French, and higher-attaining students readily understand quite sophisticated language. The quality of students' written work is uneven. The most capable write comprehensively on a topic, expressing their arguments with a clear structure and showing a mastery of complex language, including an impressive use of advanced expressions and specialist vocabulary. Lower-attaining students produce work which, while relevant and sometimes quite detailed, still contains elementary errors of grammar and vocabulary. The work of all students shows that they are using a wide variety of resources, including Internet websites.

148. Attainment in Year 12 is also rising and is above average. Students are able to understand the gist of spoken French pitched at a demanding level. They similarly work with written material of an advanced standard, and their comprehension skills are equal to the task. The more highly attaining students express arguments with clarity and give evidence for their views. Lower-attaining students show a willingness to participate and a determination to communicate effectively. All students are developing an increasing range of vocabulary and expressions, including some relevant technical and specialist language. The accuracy of writing varies. Some students write with clear structure and a high degree of accuracy, while others still make grammatical errors which are sometimes elementary.

149. The sixth form teaching overall is very good. All teachers have a secure command of French, and two are native speakers. In both Years 13 and 12 teachers' expectations are consistently high. All lessons have clear aims and teachers tell their students how current work will help meet future requirements. Lessons are planned very carefully to ensure that a variety of interesting activities challenges the students and sustains their interest and enjoyment. Coursework topics are chosen which engage the interest of students and which contribute significantly to their cultural awareness. A commendable feature of the teaching is the high degree of interaction achieved between the participants: students often work in pairs or groups and this is well managed. Teachers' almost exclusive use of French in class is excellent, and all teachers are highly skilled in conveying meaning when students do not initially understand, and in eliciting detailed answers from them. Teachers know their students' strengths and weaknesses well, and target individual support accordingly. Teachers' relationships with their students are a strength, and this contributes to the vibrant and purposeful ethos in lessons. Teachers assess work very well, making sure that students know exactly what is good, what is less good and what should be done to improve. Effective use is made of resources, and the use of ICT is developing.

150. Students approach French with maturity. They respond to their teachers' high expectations with a determination to achieve or surpass their targets, and they are very keen to participate in class. They show genuine interest in their work. They have been trained in effective ways of understanding the gist of written and spoken sources, and show good and sometimes impressive skill in doing so. They have been advised how to improve their own learning and performance, and their research skills and use of study time are effective. They seek advice on how to improve their work and act on it, thereby securing good progress on points previously difficult to them. The higher-attaining students bring into class their more extended learning and contribute this to their benefit and that of others.

151. Two teachers teach each A-level group: this collaboration is effective and adds to the learning experience of the students. The department is very well managed and its teachers are dedicated and work well as a team. Another effective feature of the management of the department is its focus on the quality of teaching and learning, a standing item at all department meetings. The handbook and the outcomes of professional dialogue are consistently applied and students thereby benefit from uniformly high standards of provision.