

INSPECTION REPORT

DARTFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Dartford, Kent

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118878

Headteacher: Mr A J Smith

Lead inspector: Mrs S D Morgan

Dates of inspection: 20th – 24th September 2004

Inspection number: 268792

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	11-16 boys 16-18 mixed
Number on roll:	1242
School address:	West Hill Dartford
Postcode:	DA1 2HW
Telephone number:	01322 223039
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Chair of governors:	Mr J Field
Date of previous inspection:	February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Dartford Grammar is a large selective school. It has 781 boys in Years 7 to 11 and a mixed sixth form of 461 students, 104 of whom are girls. The school is situated in Kent, which has selective schools, and Dartford recruits its students from the top 25 per cent of the ability range. Students' attainment on entry is therefore well above average. The school takes its students from a wide area. The percentage of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, at just over one percent, is well below average. A well below average proportion of students has been identified as having special educational needs. The needs of these students mostly relate to a physical impairment or disability. A well below average proportion of students have a statement of special educational need. Almost four fifths of students are white British, with small numbers from a range of other ethnic groups. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is higher than in most schools; however, none are at an early stage of learning English.

Dartford has Language College status. The school is popular with parents and is oversubscribed. It has received a number of awards, including the DfES Achievement Award and Investors in People status and it is involved in initiatives such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1355	Mrs S D Morgan	Lead inspector	
19798	Mrs J O'Keefe	Lay inspector	
23487	Mrs P Kitley	Team inspector	6 th form English A-level and International Baccalaureate
33535	Ms J Jones	Team inspector	English 11-16
1503	Mr T Browne	Team inspector	Mathematics 11-16, 6 th form mathematics A-level and International Baccalaureate
3242	Dr M Newman	Team inspector	Science 11-16, 6 th form chemistry A-level
32590	Mr R Fenwick	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) 11-16
2501	Ms R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Citizenship
33135	Ms K Ropek	Team inspector	Art and design 11-16
2495	Mr B Munden	Team inspector	Design and technology 11-16, 6 th form design and technology A-level
10817	Mr G Rayner	Team inspector	Geography 11-16, 6 th form geography A-level
33645	Mr S Oliver	Team inspector	History 11-16, 6 th form business studies A-level
34089	Mr R Gaff	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages 11-16, 6 th form Spanish International Baccalaureate
4617	Mrs R Fox	Team inspector	6 th form German International Baccalaureate
31701	Mr G Rudland	Team inspector	Music 11-16, 6 th form music International Baccalaureate
3726	Mrs M Bean	Team inspector	Physical education 11-16
14633	Mrs J Bannister	Team inspector	Religious education, 6 th form history International Baccalaureate
32785	Dr W Allt	Team inspector	6 th form biology A-level, 6 th form information technology International Baccalaureate
24453	Mr G Jackson	Team inspector	6 th form physics International Baccalaureate

30800	Mrs B Colley	Team inspector	Special educational needs, 6 th form physical education A-level, 6 th form theory of knowledge International Bacculaureate
31694	Mr M Sutherland - Harper	Team inspector	6 th form French A-level
3525	Mr P McGregor	Team inspector	

The inspection contractor was:

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	11
Standards achieved in, subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	15
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	22
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES	
Work-related learning	24
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	25
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	65

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Dartford Grammar is a very good school with a number of excellent features. The school has an excellent ethos. Students are proud of the school and parents are very supportive. Standards are very high and have shown continued improvement. Teaching is very good and students achieve very well. The leadership and management of the school are very good. Staff share a very clear vision of how to develop the school further. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- An ethos which fosters excellent attitudes and behaviour and which motivates students to achieve their very best
- Results which show continued improvement and are very high
- An excellent innovative curriculum which meets students' academic needs and provides outstanding opportunities for enrichment, service to the community and development of international awareness
- Visionary leadership from the headteacher which continues to drive the school forward
- Excellent links with the community and with other schools and colleges, both in the United Kingdom, and overseas
- Teaching and learning are very good overall. However, a small number of lessons, particularly in Years 8 and 9 have weaknesses

Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Through its language college status and teaching of the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB), in the sixth form, the school has actively sought to share its expertise both within the local and wider communities. It has systematically dealt with almost all of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report. Standards and teaching have shown continued improvement and strengths in other areas of its work have been built upon. The school community shares a strong commitment to further improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Standards in the International Baccalaureate Diploma at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentages of students who achieved all they studied	99 (96.0)	89.9 (89.5)

There were 175 students in the year group 80 of whom took the IB. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Students achieve very well, overall.

When students enter the school, their level of attainment is well above average. For the last three years results in national tests at the end of Year 9, in English, mathematics and science have been very high (in the top five per cent) when compared with all schools nationally. In 2003 students' achievements were above average in relation to their performance in national tests at the end of Year 6. This represents good achievement, overall. Current standards are

broadly similar. They are very high in some subjects, such as English and mathematics. Inspection evidence showed students' achievements to be good overall.

GCSE results have improved at a similar rate to that seen nationally and have been consistently very high. Current standards are similar and students are achieving very well. Inspection evidence showed very good achievement in a number of subjects, including English, geography, modern foreign languages and music, with excellent achievement in history.

In the sixth form overall standards are very high and students achieve very well in relation to their previous results. In subjects inspected in depth, students' achievements were very good in a number of subjects.

Students are proud of their school and they are supported by its excellent ethos which focuses on the achievement of all. **Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, overall.** Their attitudes, values and behaviour are excellent, as is their attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school is providing a very good education for its students.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. It is good in Years 7 to 9, very good in Years 10 and 11 and excellent in the sixth form. The high level of good, very good and excellent teaching is a major factor in students' very good achievement as they progress through the school. Teaching was at least good in almost all subjects and very good in a large number, including English, geography and modern foreign languages. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are very successful at developing the interests of older students and preparing them for examinations. They have very high expectations of what students will achieve and insist on high standards of behaviour. Lessons start very promptly and students apply themselves to their work, both in class and at home. These factors support their learning very well. In some lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9 work was too prescriptive and did not provide students with enough opportunities to think for themselves. Assessment procedures are very good and the information gathered is used very effectively to help teachers plan future work and set targets for individual student improvement.

The curriculum is excellent and innovative. It provides wide ranging opportunities for enrichment. The successful introduction of the IB diploma in the sixth form, and very recently the Middle Years Programme is helping to meet the needs of all students. Very good arrangements are in place for students' pastoral guidance and support and the school has a very good partnership with parents. Excellent links have been developed with the local community and with other schools and colleges both in the United Kingdom and overseas.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The leadership of senior managers is very good, as is the governance of the school. Over a significant period the outstanding leadership of the headteacher has been characterised by a drive for innovation whilst ensuring the achievement of students through improving teaching and learning. Through this approach the improvement in many aspects of the school's work has been ensured. Currently, statutory requirements relating to a daily act of collective worship are not being met fully.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Those parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, or who attended the meeting prior to the inspection, expressed considerable satisfaction with what the school provides. They feel that the school expects their children to work hard and that they make good progress. They feel that the school is managed well and teaching is good. Students are very positive about the school. They said the school expected them to do their best. Sixth form students said they enjoyed being in the sixth form and teaching was challenging.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve further is

- Ensure that the quality of teaching in all lessons fully challenges students, is not prescriptive, and provides opportunities for them to think and solve problems for themselves and to meet statutory requirements
- provide a daily act of collective worship

THE SIXTH FORM AT DARTFORD GRAMMAR

A large mixed sixth form of 357 boys and 104 girls. A wide range of subjects is offered at both GCE A-level and IB Diploma

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is both very effective and very cost effective. Students attained A -level results that were well above the national average in 2003 and IB Diploma results that were very high when compared to the worldwide average in 2004. Their overall achievement was very good in relation to their above average standards on entry. It provides a positive environment for the personal and social development of students. Teaching in the sixth form is excellent and students are offered very good levels of support. The school offers a wide range of subjects at A-level and IB and nearly two thirds of the students have chosen to study IB. The larger than average sixth form attracts students with a diversity of background from a wide area.

The main strengths are

- The school's excellent provision of courses, through its Language College status, A-level and IB creates a clear sense of world citizenship in students
- Excellent teaching enables students to reach high standards in what they do
- Students value highly the support they receive from knowledgeable and committed teachers
- Students use the time allocated for private study very well and develop a strong sense of independence that prepares them for life beyond school

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<p>English: excellent. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge, enthusiasm for literature and high expectations enable students on both A-level and IB courses to learn very well. Achievement is very good. Very well prepared course materials enable students to explore a wide body of literature, and IB students develop a strong appreciation of works from other cultures.</p> <p>French A-level: very good. Teaching and learning are very good and result in students making very good progress relative to their prior attainment</p> <p>German IB: good. Good teaching and a wide variety of teaching and assessing methods results in good learning and achievement.</p> <p>Spanish IB: very good. Teaching and learning are excellent with very good support for students. The international dimension is promoted strongly by staff and appreciated by students.</p>
Mathematics	<p>Good: teachers have very good subject knowledge. Students are highly motivated and work hard in A-level and IB higher and standard level courses. Achievement is good in all three.</p>
Science	<p>Biology A-level: good subject knowledge, teaching and regular testing enhance students' learning. Achievement is good.</p>

	<p>Chemistry Alevel: good. Standards are well above average. Chemistry is a popular subject characterised by very good teaching, very knowledgeable teachers and a strong range of experience of the chemical industry. Very good learning and good achievement are contributed to by the students' good attitudes to work and good attitudes to the subject.</p> <p>Physics IB: satisfactory. Standards are above average and students are making satisfactory progress as a result of accurate and secure teaching from knowledgeable teachers.</p>
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Curriculum area	Evaluation
Information and communication technology	IB: very good. Lessons are well planned and include a variety of activities. Teachers are enthusiastic, have good subject knowledge and keep up with developments. Students are enthusiastic and achieve very well.
Humanities	<p>Geography Alevel: very good. Teaching and learning are very good, and sometimes excellent, leading to very good achievement. Students' very positive responses make a significant contribution to their own achievement.</p> <p>History IB: very good. Standards are well above average. Students have very positive attitudes and achieve very well owing to very good teaching and support from their teachers.</p> <p>Theory of Knowledge IB: very good. A very well structured course which presents students with intellectual challenge and expectations of high standards. Achievement is very good as students are prepared very well with skills and techniques which complement their other studies.</p>
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Design and technology Alevel: good. Standards achieved with available resources are above average. Students build on their prior attainment well because teaching is good and they have positive attitudes to their learning.
Visual and performing arts and media	Music IB: excellent. Very good teaching and excellent support for students' musical development leads to standards that are very high.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Physical education Alevel: very good. The subject is very well led and managed. Achievement is very good and standards seen are well above average. Students benefit from excellent extra-curricular provision which extends and supports very good teaching and learning.
Business	A-level: very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Students achieve highly because lessons are well structured. They appreciate the high levels of support given by teachers.
	In other subjects , work was sampled. Overall, teaching was very good .

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive very good quality support and guidance. Careful induction procedures are in place for the many students who join the school in Year 12. Information about the choice of A-level, IB or other courses, and the quality of advice on career opportunities and entry to university is very good. Excellent opportunities are provided for students to broaden their experience through the range of community, national and international initiatives that flourish within the school. Reporting and review procedures are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the sixth form is very good and shows a clear view of areas that are in need of improvement. Management is very good and the school has introduced two learning support officers to bring greater consistency in the quality of support to students.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Discussions between inspectors and a significant number of sixth form students indicate that students are generally very happy and supportive of school. They value highly the support they receive and have excellent attitudes and are very articulate and mature.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students' attainment on entry is well above average. Their achievements throughout the school are very good and standards are generally very high.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results which show continued improvement and are very high
- Students achieve very well in Years 10, 11 and the sixth form
- In Years 10 and 11, students' achievements are outstanding in history
- In Years 7 to 9, students achieve less well in information and communication technology (ICT) than in their other subjects owing to a lack of access to computers

Commentary

1. Results in the 2003 national tests, at the end of Year 9, were very high when compared with all schools nationally. Students' achievements were above average in relation to their performance in national tests at the end of Year 6. This represents good achievement, overall. Current standards are broadly similar. Students' achievements were found to be good, overall. Owing to the excellent ethos of the school they develop very positive attitudes to work and this supports their learning very well as they progress through the school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	40.5 (42.6)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	47.6 (47.7)	35.4 (34.7)
science	42.8 (44.2)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 150 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. GCSE results have been consistently very high when compared with all schools nationally. The proportion of students gaining 5 or more GCSE A* - C grades, 5 or more A*-G grades and 1 or more A*-G grades was very high. Students achieved well in relation to their performance in national tests at the end of Year 9. Inspection evidence indicates that students have very positive attitudes towards their studies and are achieving very well.
3. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve very well in subjects such as English, geography, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and citizenship. In history, their achievements are outstanding because there is a strong sense of shared purpose and mutual respect. Very good support and guidance on how to improve is provided by teachers, and this motivates students to attain high standards. Students who do not take religious education to examination level achieve satisfactorily and standards are in line with those expected by the locally agreed syllabus; whilst students are provided with planned opportunities for discussion on a range of issues such as marriage and relationships, prejudice and discrimination they seldom put their thoughts and views into writing, and this limits the opportunities for them to reinforce and consolidate their learning.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	100 (97)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (99)	91 (91)

Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	53.9 (51.6)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 180 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Students with special educational needs achieve very well and do as well as other students. This is because there are very good systems of communication between teachers on the particular special needs of each student.
5. Gifted and talented students achieve very well, overall, and in most subjects the provision is very good. The targeting of higher-attaining students is excellent in extra-curricular activities; for example, in physical education, students are encouraged to perform as high as national level. In most subjects, high expectations and good opportunities are helping to raise the standards and achievement of high-attaining students.
6. The achievement of students with English as an additional language is very good, overall. The school has made very good provision for students with another language at home. It monitors the results of this group of students in national tests at the end of Years 9 and 11. This shows that as they move through the school they make very good progress. Links with outside agencies are very good, ensuring that the few students who arrive at the school with very little English are assessed quickly and have appropriate support.
7. Emphasis is placed on the development of students' literacy skills in all subjects. Overall, standards of reading and writing are well above average. Students' competence in mathematics is very high and supports their learning in other subjects. As students progress through the school they use ICT for a range of applications. At times, students' progress is limited as demand for the available specialist facilities is high and many do not have sufficient access to computers to enhance their studies adequately. Therefore, their overall competence in using ICT is only good.
8. The school makes excellent provision for students to learn a range of languages. French, German, Spanish and Japanese are offered in Year 7 and standards in all four subjects are well above average and students achieve very well. In Year 8, French, German, Spanish and Japanese are subsequently available as second languages and students can study any two of these languages to GCSE.
9. In Year 9, there are fast track groups in the three European languages where the highest-attaining linguists and historians are taught history through the medium of the foreign language. This provision is exceptional and teaching and learning in the lesson observed during the inspection were excellent. Students made excellent progress both in developing their languages skills and increasing their vocabulary and structures and in developing their understanding of historical research and study.

Sixth form

10. Since the time of the last inspection, the number of students and range of courses offered have increased. When IB and A-level results are aggregated, they are very high and indicate that students achieve very well, overall. This aggregation uses a points system and converts IB levels to equivalent A-level grades. For example, IB higher levels 6 and 7 are counted as an A grade at A-level and higher level 5 between a B and a C grade.
11. Work is carefully planned to challenge and extend students' knowledge and understanding. Students on the IB Diploma course have a wide range of opportunities to think critically and reflect on their ideas and opinions. In almost all of the subjects inspected in depth students' achievements were good or better. They were very good in a number of subjects, including English (A-level and IB), business education (A-level), Spanish (IB), information technology (IB), theory of knowledge (IB) and music (IB). In physics (IB), they were only satisfactory as teaching did not provide sufficient challenge for students and their work showed that they had few opportunities for extended writing or use of ICT skills.

12. The school makes excellent provision for students to learn a range of languages. Five European languages – French, German, Spanish, Russian and Italian are taught in addition to Arabic, Chinese and Japanese which are offered as ab initio courses.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	94.1 (97.2)	89.4(92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	45.8 (46.8)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per student	373.1 (373.5)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 175 students in the year group_95 of whom took GCE A/AS level and VCE. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards in the International Baccalaureate Diploma at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentages of pupils who achieved all they studied	99 (96.0)	89.9 (89.5)

There were 175 students in the year group 80 of whom took the IB. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students have excellent attitudes, values and behaviour.

Main strengths

- Students enjoy coming to this school and their attitudes to their work are excellent
- Behaviour is exemplary in almost all lessons and around the school
- The provision for students' moral, social and cultural development is outstanding
- Students' spiritual development is fostered very well

Commentary

13. Attendance is very high compared to other schools nationally and continues to improve. Students clearly enjoy coming to school and punctuality in the mornings and for lessons is very good.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.3	School data	0.0
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

14. Students are very supportive and proud of their school. They are exceptionally conscientious and hardworking and this has an extremely positive effect on their achievement. As one student said 'we are all very motivated here'. Students arrive at school fully prepared to do their best. They are well organised and ready for lessons often having done extensive research on topics beforehand. Concentration is very high in most lessons with students listening and working very quietly.
15. The behaviour of students is outstanding, overall. They are very respectful to staff who they feel are 'firm but fair'. In a very small number of lessons, where teachers lacked experience, students were less well behaved and easily distracted. Only one student was permanently

excluded in the reporting year and this was dealt with appropriately by staff. Students are very actively involved in the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided for them. Bullying is rare and students are confident that, should it occur, it will be dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Relationships are very good in the school. Students work very well together collaboratively in lessons and when, for example, organising charity fund-raising events. Thanks to the school's excellent ethos, and the very high expectations of staff, students mature and develop very well as they progress through the school.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	927	25	1
White – any other White background	13	1	
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	2	
Asian or Asian British – Indian	32	3	
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	1	
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	1	
Black or Black British – African	11	1	
Black or Black British – any other Black background	29	1	

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

16. The school is extremely successful in promoting students' moral, social and cultural development.
17. Students also develop very well spiritually with many opportunities for reflection in lessons. However, the school does not currently meet fully its legal obligation to provide an opportunity for collective worship each day. The personal development of students as they progress through the school is outstanding: 'It just gets friendlier as you go through,' commented one student. Students' self-esteem is raised as they mature and students take great pride in the many responsibilities they have around the school. The difference between right and wrong is clearly understood by all, with moral issues frequently discussed in lessons and during form times. School rules are very clearly stated and well respected by students. Students have many opportunities to experience a range of cultures not only in lessons such as art and music but also, through the school's language college status, the very high number of exchange visits to other countries.
18. Overall, students' attitudes, behaviour and attendance have improved even further since the last inspection

Sixth Form

19. Students are very happy with the school and fully appreciate the opportunities it offers them. They are very motivated and keen to do well. Their behaviour and attitudes to their work are excellent. Attendance is very high and all are punctual to lessons. Students are confident, assured and express their views clearly. The sixth form committee gives students a chance to have their say on the school and its future development.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are very good. The curriculum is excellent.

Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good and it is excellent in the sixth form. Assessment procedures are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Over forty per cent of the lessons observed were very good or excellent
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and prepare students very well for examinations
- Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11 and excellent in the sixth form
- Teachers set challenging work and have very high expectations of what students will achieve
- Students' very good attitudes and application to their studies support their learning very well
- Lessons are planned well and learning objectives are shared with students
- Very good relationships are fostered through encouragement and praise
- Lessons start very promptly and both students and teachers make very good use of the time available
- Very good use is made of assessment information to track students' achievements and set challenging targets
- Marking in almost all subjects is very good and students have a very secure understanding of how to improve their work
- In some lessons, teaching is very prescriptive and insufficient opportunities are provided for students to think and solve problems for themselves

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 206 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
21(10%)	68 (33%)	75(36 %)	38(18 %)	4(2%)	0(0 %)	0(0 %)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Commentary

20. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. It has improved since the last inspection when it was judged to be good. Just over ten per cent of the lessons observed were excellent, a high proportion. Teaching in the sixth form is excellent as half of the lessons observed were very good or better and almost thirteen per cent were excellent.
21. The best teaching was seen in Years 7, 10, 11, 12 and 13 where all lessons were satisfactory or better. The school has worked hard to recruit suitable staff and has been successful in supporting those who are new to the school. The high proportion of good and very good teaching is a major factor in students' very good achievement.
22. Both students and parents are very positive about the quality of teaching. In questionnaire responses and discussions they said that teaching was good, and staff had high expectations and good subject knowledge. Inspection evidence supports these positive views. Overall, teaching was at least satisfactory in all subjects and good or very good in almost all. The teaching observed in sixth form English and Spanish lessons was excellent. In sixth form physics, and ICT in Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning were satisfactory.
23. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and prepare students very well for examinations. They plan their lessons very well and examination course work requirements are carefully explained. Teachers make clear to students what they have to do to achieve examination success and

appropriate homework is set regularly to support students' learning. In the best lessons, teachers set very challenging work and have very high expectations of what will be achieved. When introducing lessons they show great enthusiasm for their subject, which gains students' interest and motivates them. For example, in a Year 10 drama lesson the teacher injected considerable pace into the warm-up activity. As the lesson progressed, excellent language development was incorporated into characterisation, and students contributed using a wide range of vocabulary as the differences between the characters in the text were teased out. Very good working routines ensured that students were confident in evaluating each other's performance and were able to abandon using scripts so they could concentrate on developing facial expressions and gestures. This resulted in a very high standard of performance and excellent achievement.

24. The excellent ethos which promotes values such as hard work and application supports students' learning very well. Lessons start promptly and this ensures that teaching time is used very effectively. Teachers explain what is to be done and set clear time scales for the completion of particular tasks. For example, in a Year 7 Spanish lesson students were greeted in Spanish and the work was very carefully explained. The teacher checked students' understanding and they were encouraged to answer in complete sentences. Tasks were short and focused and the teacher planned very good opportunities for students to practise their language skills whilst working in pairs. Students worked hard throughout and made very good learning gains.
25. Very good working relationships are evident throughout the school. Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour and develop students' confidence through encouragement and praise. In a Year 8 physical education lesson for example, a lower-attaining group of students were given additional support and coaching. The teacher carefully explained what should be done and checked students' understanding through careful questioning. Students who had mastered particular skills were used to demonstrate to the rest of the group. The teacher gave small points for improvement and praised progress made. This set a very good climate for learning in which all students felt valued and made very good progress.
26. In the lessons that were satisfactory some of the features of good, very good and excellent lessons were evident. However, in these lessons teaching was often very prescriptive and insufficient opportunities were provided for students to think for themselves. For example in a Year 9 design and technology lesson, the teacher tended to talk at, rather than engage students in discussion. The result was students' attention wandered and they became less attentive as the lesson progressed. In the very few lessons that were unsatisfactory, teachers did not have the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour and this slowed the pace of the lesson and not enough learning took place.
27. The school considers the needs of students well. All students are monitored carefully to meet any special needs they may have and action is taken to give necessary support. Appropriate individual plans are drawn up and teachers monitor improvement for these students well.
28. Assessments are used very effectively to set whole-school and individual targets and to track the progress being made. Realistic, but challenging targets are central to the academic life of the school. Very good use is made of Year 6 and subsequent assessment information to shape the curriculum and pitch teaching at a realistic but challenging level. The progress students make towards their targets is recognised and praised and this encourages them to strive for more challenging goals in the future. Targets underpin teachers' expectations, and in all but a small minority of lessons help them modify their teaching and set students' individual learning goals. Teachers' assessments are closely monitored in order to maintain the high standards and further improve students' achievement.
29. Teachers' very high aspirations and expectations are communicated well in their marking and when they give oral feedback. This is particularly good in Years 10 and 11 where the examination criteria are used very effectively to guide teachers' assessments and boys' understanding of their performance. For example, marking in English is excellent. Students understand why they achieved the standard they have and know what they can do to improve their performance further. They are able to redraft and modify their work to reflect their capability and the examination requirements.
30. Some teachers, mainly of younger age classes, did not use their assessments rigorously enough when planning projects and lessons. For example in some ICT lessons and in aspects of design and technology, the work teachers set did not always reflect the high standards of which the boys were

capable. In their assessments of ICT, teachers are not sufficiently aware of the curriculum requirements and expectations.

Sixth Form

31. Overall, teaching in the sixth form is excellent. In almost all of the subjects inspected in depth, teaching was good or very good and in English and Spanish it was excellent. Students were very positive about the quality of teaching and commented on the high level of staff expertise. Strengths noted in teaching were similar to those found in the rest of the school. Particular strengths in students' learning are their high levels of motivation and application and their increasing ability to work independently, for example when undertaking research.
32. Excellent use is made of assessment and other information by senior managers both to maintain standards in the sixth form and as a basis for improving them. Assessments guide decisions about entry onto courses and are used very constructively to monitor students' achievements and progress. The combination of students' excellent attitudes to study and the outstanding quality of feedback they receive from the majority of teachers helps them achieve personal goals and aspirations. The on-going assessments, in all but a small number of subjects, give students a very clear picture of how to improve their work whilst developing skills of independent enquiry. As a result, students are very well prepared for higher education.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is excellent. Students benefit from an outstanding curriculum that develops excellent social responsibility and international awareness. It provides the statutory range of the requirements, and goes way beyond these to reflect the specialist nature of the school, offering innovative IB Diploma courses in the coeducational sixth form. The excellent extra-curricular opportunities offer an exceptionally rich and diverse range of sporting, musical and cultural activities that mirror the international flavour of the school. The school does not fully meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides an excellent curriculum that meets the needs of its students, and reflects the ethos of a specialist language school
- The excellent, wide range of sporting, cultural and study activities encourages high participation rates, and offers outstanding opportunities for students
- Almost all teachers and support staff are highly qualified and are well matched to the demands of the curriculum
- Whilst students have benefited from the enhanced accommodation, there is a shortfall in the ICT resources and accommodation in the school

Commentary

33. The curriculum is excellent and provides a full entitlement to the statutory subjects. The school has expanded the range of subjects available to students to reflect its specialist language college status. A feature of the inspection week was the high quality of students' musical performance in assemblies. However, currently the school does not fully meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.
34. The school has excellent programmes for students. It has very recently introduced an accelerated Key Stage 3 and an extended Key Stage 4 curriculum as part of a national pilot being run by the DfES. In this initiative, students complete the National Curriculum programmes of study in Years 7 and 8. At the time of the inspection it was too early to comment on the effects this is having. In tandem with this, the school is embarking on a Middle Years Programme (MYP) that is aimed at developing internationally-minded, independent learners as a foundation for the IB Diploma. The programme has been introduced in Year 7 and the curriculum has been combined into clusters of subjects. This establishes more contact with

form tutors, helps relationships to develop rapidly, and decreases movement around the site and has been planned to help students settle into Dartford Grammar School. The humanities, art, design and technology, ICT and personal, social and health education (PSHE) are taught in merged arrangements. A few parents expressed a concern that Latin was not available in this year; this is now introduced in Year 8.

35. In Year 8, the curriculum is extended to provide a range of five European and non-European languages. Students have the benefit of opportunities to study Japanese as well as the usual range of languages. This exceptional choice enables pioneering bilingual teaching to take place in the humanities, where inspectors witnessed a history lesson, in Year 9, being taught outstandingly in French.
36. Students study a wide range of GCSE subjects that now include a short course GCSE in ICT and physical education. Students benefit from the enhanced facilities located in the Mick Jagger Centre that enable a much richer than usual performing arts curriculum.
37. The school is very inclusive and provides very good support for students with special educational needs, through the work of teachers and assistants, who are well aware of the students' individual needs. Accommodation for some timetabled groups is adjusted to allow all students to follow the timetable and to meet their needs. Support assistants are employed to help some students who have individual education plans (IEPs) to support provision in their education. Good communication is in place to assist achievement, and teachers and assistants are well aware of the needs of students, but plans do not make teachers aware of review dates even though these are kept and teachers are asked to supply full information for reviews.
38. A policy is in place for gifted and talented students, who have been formally identified in individual subjects. A thorough audit of provision across subject areas outlines the wide enrichment possibilities offered through curricular enhancement. Some subjects have raised the interests and aspirations of higher-attaining students so that they extend their learning. For example, talented musicians are coached to a professional standard and benefit from many extra-curricular opportunities so students experience one another's expertise.
39. The school has a very good, coherent programme for PSHE education in Year 7 that complements the school's move towards equipping students with thinking and learning skills right from the start. Merged lessons of PSHE and ICT with Year 7 form tutors enable a flexible double period of teaching time for these elements followed immediately by a form period or assembly. The work covers issues associated with bullying, drug misuse, health, and sex education. Citizenship focuses on government, the law, and political awareness. A major feature of the programme is the charity fund raising that is integrated into researching and persuasive promotion using ICT. This is followed through into the Years 8 and 9 programmes where groups of students plan and instigate a serious campaign to raise money for charities during the Lenten period.
40. The current Years 8 and 9 PSHE courses are taught as separate units and cover more advanced work on citizenship, drug misuse, health, and sex education. Careers education and financial understanding is introduced at this stage and uses good techniques to enable students to become aware of their ambitions and the opportunities offered in the world of work. Further evidence was seen by inspectors that citizenship, and work-related learning occurred in the teaching of other subjects. However, these areas were not identified explicitly to enable students to make the connections easily. In Years 10 and 11, students benefit from good work-related learning experiences and interesting units focusing on the family and relationships, human rights, mortality, and philosophical issues regarding conflict, religion, crime and punishment, and gender.
41. The excellent innovative practice is supported by systematic monitoring of the curriculum through analysis of results, and reviews. New initiatives are well planned and introduced over a phased period. The school has been outward looking in seeking advice, working in close partnership with other institutions, and taking advice from the Government agencies and local authority advisory services. The introduction of the IB Diploma programme in the sixth form has

led to a large expansion of numbers attending the school. The school uses video conferencing to share teacher expertise in subjects and a link with a French school.

42. The impressive range of extra-curricular activities is excellent. More than half of the students in Years 10 and 11 become involved in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Through Education Business Partnership work with Young Enterprise and Neighbourhood Engineers, students are able to benefit from industrial advice.

43. The school participation in sport is excellent. It offers a wide range of fourteen different sporting opportunities. There are frequent competitions against other schools and teams. Individual students and teams are regularly recognised at county, regional and national levels. Rugby and cricket teams have a very strong participation and the school fields become intensively used at the weekend throughout the year hosting matches. The school has over 200 students represented in the rugby teams. In 2003, the rugby team toured Canada. The inter-house competitions, athletics, and swimming galas create further year-round interest.
44. Participation in the arts is very good. The school is able to provide a wide range of music and performing arts opportunities. These include an orchestra, many bands, choirs and ensemble groups. Extensive use is made of the community performing arts centre that provides a venue for internationally famous musicians to tutor students in workshops.
45. The school has a very good match of teachers to the curriculum. It has a full complement of staff and many are highly qualified. This meets the needs of the curriculum very well. The school provides training for new teachers and works in partnership with higher education.
46. The quality of accommodation is very good, overall. The school has completed a large-scale building programme with the aid of grants, sponsorship and outside agencies. The recently developed Mick Jagger Centre has public areas, a recording studio and music technology room. These are combined with the exciting gallery space, and its video wall, and students and the local community benefit enormously.
47. New accommodation includes a dining hall and a new physical education classroom. The new teaching block offers a drama studio and an art suite. Displays of work enhance the environment. The Becket Sports Centre offers splendid accommodation, with a gym, a sprung-floor studio and large hall. The local community uses it extensively.
48. Further planned developments to accommodation, include the relocation of the sixth form centre and zoning teaching into areas for Years 9 to 11. Currently many subjects do not have their own suite of rooms. This puts extra strain on teaching staff to organise and equip these non-specialist rooms for lessons in specialist subjects. The school buildings are well maintained, with very little litter and no graffiti. The new pavilion building has enhanced the changing and public areas at the school playing fields.
49. Resources are good in many subject areas, for example in art, religious education and English. A serious shortfall in ICT provision has caused inconsistent application in subject areas. The ratio of computers to students is inadequate. In one inadequately sized ICT room the computers are too close to each other. During the inspection the network suffered from a number of technical problems that affected teaching and learning. In design and technology, there are shortfalls in the provision of basic tools. In history and business education, whiteboards are undersized and difficult to see.

Sixth form

50. The curriculum is excellent. The school offers a very broad range of courses to meet the needs of higher-attaining students. Students either study five subjects initially at AS GCE level, or the IB Diploma course. A core element of the IB course is the 'Theory of Knowledge' that equips students with study skills and encourages reflection to develop international awareness. The course also places considerable emphasis on community service. This latter element plays an important role in the sixth form where many students volunteer to work with the elderly, young or disadvantaged through the Youth in Action programme.
51. Sixth formers have very good individual support for university applications and opportunities exist for some students to experience work shadowing in Europe through the well-established international links.

52. Students benefit particularly well from the outstanding range of visits and exchanges that endorse the special language school status. Very good use is made of science, geography and history fieldwork visits, many of which take the opportunity to combine subject study with travel abroad.

Care, guidance and support

The quality of support, care and guidance for the students in the school is very good. Teachers have a clear understanding of students' achievements and developments, and relationships are very good. This is also the case in the sixth form. Procedures for seeking students' views are good, but are not yet fully developed throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Monitoring of students' achievements is very good and ensures that teachers have a comprehensive understanding of progress and development
- Relationships are very good throughout the school so that students are confident about going to an adult if they need help or advice
- Induction arrangements both for Year 7 and Year 12 students are very good and ensure a smooth transition between stages of education
- Some inconsistencies in the delivery of the PSHE programme, particularly where there are time constraints in form tutor sessions
- The school council is not yet fully in place for Years 9, 10 and 11, although plans are in hand to remedy this

Commentary

53. Students are known very well from the time they enter the school. Extensive monitoring and tracking procedures ensure that teachers have a comprehensive view of both personal development and academic progress of their students. This means that students who are likely to be under-achieving are identified quickly and an appropriate mentoring system put into place to provide support. Progress reviews are held regularly with students when targets are discussed and set, which ensures that the students themselves are very aware of and understand what they are expected to achieve by the time of the next review.
54. Relationships between students and adults are very good. Students say they are confident about talking to an adult if they feel in need of help or advice. They believe that any bullying or harassment will be dealt with quickly and effectively. Child protection arrangements comply fully with locally agreed procedures. Arrangements to ensure that the school environment is both healthy and safe for students and adults are very good.
55. Induction arrangements for students entering the school are comprehensive and ensure a smooth transition between primary and secondary schools. Year 7 tutors this year have received additional training to deliver the PSHE programme, which has been aimed specifically at supporting the induction programme. As a result, these lessons showed much more consistency of delivery and impact than PSHE lessons in Years 8, 9 and 10, where some tutors did not have enough time to teach all the material required of them.
56. The provision for advice and guidance on careers and further study opportunities is good. All students in Year 11 are given the opportunity for work experience placements. This has traditionally been at the end of the summer term which has effectively excluded the possibility of any follow-up work. The school is aware of this and plans are in hand to move the period of work experience to a more suitable time. Year 11 tutors make very good use of their PSHE and tutor time to support students in their preparations for the next stage of their lives.
57. A school council is in place for Years 7 and 8. Students are fully aware of this and feel that their views are heard and valued. Plans are in hand to set up a school council for the rest of the main school but at present the opportunities for students in these years to make their views

known are more limited, although the school does strive to ensure that some opportunities do exist in the meantime.

58. The school provides good individual guidance for all students. Very good parental support and communication between school and home supports students who have special needs and parents are involved appropriately in the review of individual education plans. Teachers are well aware of students who have special educational needs.

Sixth form

59. The means of providing support, advice and guidance in the sixth form has changed since the start of the present term from the traditional form tutor model to one of selected adults acting as “personal tutors” to a small number of students. A few students, particularly in Year 12, are finding this hard to come to terms with as they have not yet established a comfortable relationship with an adult in what is, for them, a new environment. As the system becomes more embedded, it is likely that students will find they have greater access to adult support and time than previously. Individual interviews, which involve reviews of progress and target setting, are held at regular intervals, so that students are fully aware of how they are doing and what they have to do to improve. The provision of advice for further study and careers, including the opportunity to consult with Connexions personal advisers, is very good.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school now has very good partnerships with parents and its links with the local community and other schools are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has fostered very good links with its parents
- Parents receive excellent information about their children’s progress
- Community provision is outstanding
- Excellent and supportive links have been established with other schools
- A number of parents would like to be consulted more on school developments

Commentary

60. Staff have worked hard to improve links with parents and these are now very good. The school is held in very high regard by parents and the local community. Parents were particularly pleased with the level and very high quality of information they receive on their children’s progress and there is normally one hundred percent attendance at consultation meetings. The school’s prospectus and the governors’ annual report to parents are very detailed and informative and they cover all the legal requirements for their content. In the questionnaires completed by parents, very high levels of satisfaction were clear in almost every area of the school’s work. However, a number of parents did not feel fully consulted about developments in the school. Parents are satisfied with the school’s complaints procedures and are able to speak to someone promptly if there is a problem. The school’s Parents’ Association is very successful in raising extra funds for the school.
61. The school’s outstanding community links are a particular strength. Many local families and organisations are able to make use of the school’s facilities at Becket Sports Centre and the Mick Jagger Centre for Performing Arts. Overseen by the recently appointed Arts and Leisure Manager, an excellent and varied programme of activities and performances is available during the evenings and at weekends. In addition, charitable organisations such as Mencap are beginning to make use of the sports facilities. The Mick Jagger Centre also houses the Red Rooster Project for local young musicians and Music Umbrella which provides music and movement sessions for pre-school children. Students involved in the rapidly developing Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme in the school have contributed well to local community projects.

Sixth form students have also been visiting the elderly and disabled as part of their involvement with the local VSU Youth in Action.

62. Excellent partnerships have been forged with other local schools. Through the school's Language College status excellent links have been made with primary schools in the area. For instance, last year thirteen sixth form students ran Spanish and French lessons in local schools and groups of local schoolchildren visited the school for very popular language workshops. In addition, other secondary schools in the area have received very good support and advice from the school on provision of the IB Diploma.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The leadership of senior managers is very good as is the governance of the school. Over a significant period, the outstanding leadership of the headteacher has been characterised by a drive for innovation whilst ensuring the achievement of students through improving teaching and learning.

Main strengths

- The governing body makes a major contribution to the school and provides very good governorship
- The headteacher has an exceptionally clear vision and provides outstanding leadership
- The leadership of senior and middle managers is very effective
- The school has set up clear and very effective procedures for monitoring and improving teaching, learning and the achievement of students
- Procedures for recruiting, deploying and training staff are very effective
- Financial management is very good and the principles of best value are very effectively met

Commentary

63. The governors bring to the school an extensive range and considerable depth of expertise and insight. Governors undertake their guiding and monitoring functions in a way that is both highly supportive and rigorous. Their mode of operation is highly in tune with the ethos and direction of the school and they have contributed at all stages of the development of its particular character as a flourishing language college, in a way that has been unobtrusive, but very effective. Their contribution is highly valued by those in managerial positions in the school. Governors have successfully ensured that the school now meets statutory requirements in the areas shown as key issues in the last inspection report. However, the school does not currently meet the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.
64. The headteacher's exceptionally clear and innovative vision for the direction of the school in striving to improve its curriculum and environment and his dedicated determination in the pursuit of this, have been fundamental to the character and success of the school. His leadership ensures that the school is successful in making its language college specialism have a resounding impact on most areas of the curriculum. It has inspired colleagues at all levels to support and contribute to the school's internationally significant, heavily-oversubscribed, status. The headteacher's contribution and influence extend beyond the boundaries of the school through, for example, advisory attachments to the local authority.
65. The senior leadership team has been very well chosen for its members' range of perspectives, experience and capability and they work coherently and effectively together. Leadership staff at all levels make a very effective contribution to the school's success. The overall quality of leadership and management of the subject areas is very good and, in those where current heads of department and faculty have been in place for long enough for a judgement to be made, nowhere is it less than good. However, the strategic leadership of ICT across the school requires improvement. The resourcing of this and the way in which subjects contribute to the development and application of students' ICT skills is not clearly worked out. The provision of special educational needs is sensitively organised to take account of the particular nature of the school. Satisfactory management systems are in place to coordinate the work of any students who have special educational needs. Strategies for effective teaching and learning are discussed and sometimes recorded in individual education plans. If necessary, timetable changes occur to ensure access for all students. Teachers have not had training in the SEN New Code of Practice so this has not had an impact on classroom practice and subject target setting.
66. Self-evaluation and improvement are integral to the ethos of the school. Very clear procedures for the regular monitoring and improving of student achievement and the performance of subject faculties exist. Monitoring results in honest appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses and resolute action being taken where the need for improvement is identified.

67. The school works very hard to recruit, retain and support staff. The induction programme is very good and opportunities for the continuing professional development of staff are excellent. They contribute very effectively to the high standards achieved by the school. The school has a strong commitment to initial teacher training and has supported graduate and overseas-trained teachers very successfully.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,916,074
Total expenditure	4,703,373
Expenditure per student	3,929

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	319,333
Balance carried forward to the next	532,034

68. Financial management is very good. The school's secure financial controls and enterprise have enabled its educational priority of improving accommodation for students to be met. Finances are audited both internally and externally. Governors and senior staff join together to apply effectively the principles of best value in making spending decisions and in checking how well the school is doing. The school does consider the impact of major spending decisions, but does not survey parents' and students' views on these regularly.

Sixth form

Main strengths

- Governance is very effective
- Leadership is very good and has made a significant contribution to improving the curriculum and providing guidance for students

Commentary

69. Although there are no governors with specific responsibility for the sixth form, they have very good awareness of the many strengths and the few weaknesses of this part of the school. They effectively seek to understand curricular developments and have made difficult decisions about developing courses, knowing that these impact on school in general. This has ensured that governors have been very effective in helping the school's managers to pursue an innovative approach that has given the students such an excellent choice of courses. Mindful of the unique nature of its sixth form curriculum in the local area, governors were instrumental in making this choice available to students, including girls, from other schools.
70. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very well organised. The roles of those who operate at the levels of strategic leadership and day-to-day managerial levels are clearly defined and they succeed very well in working together as a coherent team. Leadership of the curriculum has been extremely effective in providing an innovative curriculum, very well focused upon the needs of students and offering a very wide choice of GCE and IB courses. Subject leadership is very good in almost all areas.
71. Procedures for monitoring the achievements of students are very effective in ensuring that individual guidance and support is given to those who need it. The school has very recently moved to a system of learning support officers and it is not yet clear how this is impacting on the quality of monitoring and support that each student receives. However, the school's approach is to closely monitor its procedures, honestly evaluate these and make further improvements where necessary.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work-related learning is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The availability of excellent extra-curricular opportunities, the very good teaching in the subjects, and, PSHE offer good experiences for students in work-related learning
- Achievement in work-related learning is enhanced by the wide participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's award, through community service
- Work experience is not capitalised upon sufficiently as yet, and in the planning of lessons, work related learning is not always identified clearly

Commentary

72. Students' achievements in work-related learning (WRL) are good because of the excellent range of curricular and extra-curricular experiences available through the sports, arts and specialist language college provision. These provide a rich background to WRL with a strong international and cultural dimension.
73. A good, coherent careers education and guidance programme is in place for all students in Years 7 to 11. This forms a good foundation in considering the relevance of specific skills and qualifications for careers, looking at choices and decision-making. In Years 10 and 11, the work focuses on post-16 choices, and interview techniques. Students' achievements in economic awareness are increased because of good links which are made between the work being covered in subjects. For example, the analysis of data collecting used in mathematics based on local economics, and problem-solving in ICT, where students' projects are based on marketing and creating a database for an employment agency.
74. More than half of the students in Years 10 and 11 become involved in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. This rewarding programme provides students with opportunities to develop new skills, take part in physical activities, and benefit from community service.
75. Students benefit from a week of work experience at the very end of Year 11. However, its timing does not allow for a debriefing or an evaluation of their achievements. The school is aware of this and that there is a need to identify and enlist more placements that will meet the needs of gifted and talented students and high-achieving boys. Parents are given information before the placements. Health and safety requirements are checked making use of the Education Business Partnership database.
76. The curriculum and lessons currently have references to WRL for example teaching materials based on pharmaceutical and large retailing organisations. This makes the context realistic and helps students to understand the role of industry and business. These references are not yet emphasised sufficiently in the planning and teaching, and therefore students are not fully aware of the relevance of work-related content.
77. Students can seek advice from the Connexions Partnerships to help with career action planning. Students following geography and design & technology have additional opportunities to relate their GCSE coursework to an industrial context.
78. The senior management team has a good strategic overview. The school has not as yet fully audited the requirements for WRL against the many wide-ranging opportunities that exist for students to learn about work, enterprise and employment. It has recently appointed its own co-ordinator, based permanently in the school, to enable closer working with students, tutors and management. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is promoted well.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths

- Very high standards in national tests have been maintained
- Very good, stimulating teaching prepares students very well for examinations
- Excellent marking and assessment policy contributes significantly to the progress made by students

Commentary

Examination results

79. Results in national tests for 14 year olds taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were very high when compared with similar schools. Most recent results have shown an improvement. In 2003 GCSE English, all students achieved the higher grades (A* - C) with just over half achieving A* - A. In GCSE English literature, students were even more successful, with over two thirds achieving A* - A grades. This represents very high achievement. The work seen during the inspection confirms these standards.

Standards and achievement

80. Standards on entry are well above average. Achievement is very good by the end of Year 9 as a result of structured teaching which follows national guidelines. This is evident in students' writing, but there is less independent work, particularly in response to reading, by the highest-attaining students. New systems for accelerated learning introduced into Year 7 will provide scope for a wider range of study to enrich students' learning in Year 9. Well-planned and marked homework contributes to very good progression in both reading and writing. In Years 10 and 11, very high standards have been maintained over some years and this represents very good achievement, especially in GCSE English literature. By Year 11, students have developed good analytical skills and their critical writing on set texts reveals a good understanding of form and content. Students make significant progress because their attitude to learning is very good.

Teaching and learning

81. The quality of teaching and learning throughout Years 7 to 11 is very good because the department has worked effectively to develop challenging teaching approaches and resources, combined with a consistent approach to assessment, which tells students how to improve their work. The new Middle Years Programme has been enthusiastically developed to increase pace and challenge in lessons. In this multi-sensory approach to learning students were observed applying a range of ways of demonstrating understanding. In a Year 7 lesson,

students were drawing pictures to record the action sequence of a story, followed by plotting a tension graph. A strength of the department is how well students are prepared for public examinations by stimulating teaching and particular attention is paid to students acquiring the skills of analysis of media and literature. In a GCSE coursework assignment, a Year 10 student presented a coherent argument for school sport to be banned, another included a quotation in Middle English in a piece of writing inspired by 'The Canterbury Tales'. Teaching is well matched to students' skill level promoting very good behaviour, so that all students are actively involved and contribute positively to lessons. Standards of reading and writing observed during the inspection were higher than those of speaking and listening, but students are keen to engage in discussion.

Leadership and management

82. The subject is very strongly led and very well managed. Departmental documents are clear, detailed and strongly focused on raising students' attainment. The comprehensive scheme of work evolves with each new initiative. The department benefits from a committed and mutually supportive team of teachers who regularly evaluate their work and seek ways to improve their planning and teaching. The present schemes of assessment are good and allow individual students to track and plan their own progress. The department is well resourced and plays a very good part in developing students' understanding of spiritual, moral and cultural issues. This is done through studying poems and novels, through discussion and in students' own writing. The department makes good use of the Learning Resource Centre where students make use of ICT for research. The use of ICT is a target prioritised by the department for future development. Since the last inspection high standards have been maintained and English continues to be a strong feature of the school's provision.

Drama

83. The focus of the inspection was on English and English literature, but drama was also sampled. Results in 2003 GCSE examinations are well above expected levels and nearly three quarters of students gained the highest grades A*-A. Current standards are similar. In the lessons sampled in Years 9 and 10, there is very good achievement across the ability range because teachers focus on technique and give positive guidance on improving performance through evaluation. Year 9 students notice details and make thoughtful comments about the build up of tension. As an audience they make very good contributions by directing the action and suggesting ways to improve use of style, mime and freeze frame, time and space. Work is enhanced by their above average literacy skills and performances improve as the lesson progresses. Year 10 students are responsive to the rapid pace of their lesson as they move from sculpting freeze frame portraits of a character from 'Art' to "hot seating" and duologues. The highest-attaining students abandon their scripts quickly so they can use facial expression and gesture to greater effect.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

84. Provision for teaching English language and literacy across the school is very good, overall. Although a literacy policy is in place, the working party set up to plan it no longer meets, and provision varies with the quality of teaching and competence of students. The teacher's role in developing literacy skills was less evident in Year 7 lessons. Students enter school with above average literacy skills and high standards of accuracy in written work are a feature of many subjects. However, work is poorly presented in some German and religious studies books, and there is not sufficient challenge to write extended answers in science and geography. Very good opportunities are planned for students to research, read aloud and present their findings in art, drama, English, music, geography and physical education. They use technical vocabulary naturally in mathematics, science, design and technology, and use target modern foreign languages with a high degree of accuracy. Nevertheless, students are less confident in

presenting their findings to a wider audience in class and assembly: their voices are sometimes inaudible and their reading lacks expression.

Modern Foreign Languages

All students take either French, German, Spanish or Japanese in Year 7. In Year 8, they choose a further language which they continue to GCSE. Additionally, in Year 9 the highest-attaining linguists and historians are taught history through the medium of one of the European languages they study. During the inspection the focus was on French, German and Spanish. Japanese was also sampled.

Provision in Modern Foreign Languages is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment across the languages are very high
- The quality of teaching overall is very good, and some examples of outstanding practice were seen
- Many students throughout the school show very positive attitudes to language learning
- The innovative bi-lingual teaching project is a strength, and is valued by students and their parents
- Many students have benefited from the wide range of international visits and exchanges
- Classes often do not have access to appropriate resources during lessons

Commentary

Examination results

85. Results of end-of-Year 9 teacher assessments have been very high in recent years in comparison to those reported nationally. GCSE results for French, German and Spanish have also been very high, particularly in terms of numbers achieving the highest grades (A* - B). In 2003, students' performance in these languages was better than in all other subjects in the school.

Standards and achievement

86. Students achieve very well in all years. By the end of Year 9, most students can write and speak confidently and accurately, using a range of tenses, and increasingly sophisticated expressions such as "después de cenar" or "après avoir mangé". Standards in the four language skills at the end of Year 11 are very high, and many students display knowledge and skills that go beyond the requirements of GCSE: for example, a Year 11 German class discussing the world of work showed both the progress they had made in language learning and their enjoyment of it.

Teaching and learning

87. Teachers plan lessons carefully to include a range of activities: the levels are generally well-suited to promote students' learning very effectively and engage their interest. They show an excellent command of the languages they teach, and have established them as the norm for classroom communication. The best lessons observed were conducted at a challenging pace which the majority of students coped with very well and enjoyed. They included opportunities for pair work and group discussion to which students responded positively. However, because many lessons take place in rooms not dedicated to languages, teachers are often unable to use resources such as dictionaries or ICT which would enhance students' learning. This results in insufficient variety in some lessons. Students' work is marked regularly and carefully according to an agreed framework which incorporates external examination requirements: students are given clear indications of their current and predicted standards, and of what they

need to do in order to improve. Students' value being taught not just what to learn but how to learn.

Leadership and management

88. The quality of leadership in the modern languages faculty is outstanding. There is a very clear vision of where the faculty should go and what it needs to do in order to get there, and evidence that the comprehensive range of clear policies and procedures are being observed. The difficult task of managing a large number of staff, including recently qualified as well as very experienced teachers and several part-timers, is being accomplished very effectively. Teachers organise many visits and exchanges, and links which will lead to further visits, for example to Japan, are already in place. The bilingual teaching project has a positive impact in terms of the standards achieved by the highest-attaining students in Year 11. An outreach programme whereby 6th Form students teach lessons in local primary schools is much appreciated by those schools. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good: all the issues raised have been dealt with, with the result that some areas of weakness, for example use of the target language in lessons, are now clearly strengths.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

	Year 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are very high in both Year 9 tests and at GCSE
- Students work very hard and rapidly acquire mathematical knowledge and skills
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge which contributes to high standards
- There are inconsistencies in teaching particularly in the development of problem-solving skills

Commentary

Examination results

89. Results in Year 9 and at GCSE in 2003 were very high when compared with all schools, and the improving trend in results continued into 2004. More than half of students achieved either grade A* or A at GCSE in each of the last two years.

Standards and achievement

90. Students start the school with standards in mathematics that are high, and these are rapidly built upon. The students achieve well across all areas of mathematics. For example, they are accurate when calculating to a required degree of accuracy or when manipulating algebraic expressions. Their skills in trigonometry and knowledge of geometry are particularly strong. Students in both Years 8 and 9 were using advanced skills in trigonometry to calculate accurately the sides and angles of various types of triangle. Recorded work showed that students can successfully carry out mathematical investigations and produce detailed reports. However, they are given insufficient opportunity in some lessons to think for themselves so their

skills in solving problems in new situations are less strong. Students succeed best in recalling and applying routine procedures that they have been taught.

Teaching and learning

91. The quality of teaching seen in lessons ranged from excellent to satisfactory. The mathematical expertise of all the teachers ensures that students learn the correct notation and the rigour needed in mathematics. Teaching consistently sets high expectations and the regular setting of homework successfully reinforces learning from lessons. Planning is good and incorporates effective uses of ICT, although the resources needed for this are limited. The progress of students is assessed well but teachers provide little feedback to students through comments in exercise books. The very best teaching enabled students to learn in a variety of ways, including explanation and practice, discussion of ideas as well as individual work. The most effective lessons started with quick-fire challenges to engage students, made the intentions clear and ended with a plenary that reviewed what had been learnt. An excellent Year 7 lesson included a brisk arithmetic starter, small group discussion of statistical analysis and a plenary that focused on key words, supported using an interactive whiteboard. In the less strong lessons, the students spent long periods listening and writing without any discussion or real exploration of the mathematical methods or ideas. However, in all lessons the students behave very well, concentrate and work hard. Coupled with the subject expertise of the teachers and well-organised courses, this enables the students to reach very high standards.

Leadership and management

92. Leadership has ensured that results have continued to improve since the last inspection, although minor weaknesses identified at that time still need attention. Strengths include the monitoring of standards, and the continuing development and systematic organisation of schemes of work. The department has identified appropriate targets for further improvement, such as the development of the accelerated course in Years 7 and 8. The good leadership motivates staff to work hard and to provide keen support to students.

Mathematics across the curriculum

93. Students use their mathematics skills to very good effect in other subjects. They take accurate measurements for example when using apparatus and equipment in physical education, science and design and technology. In an English lesson, the students produced a graph to help represent how the tension in a story changed when reading through a chapter, and in geography they drew graphs to help explain population changes over time. Calculations in chemistry and physics are carried out quickly and accurately, and the mathematics does not detract from the learning of science. In art, the mathematical language of shape and space is reinforced very well. Teachers use mathematics frequently and confidently to support their teaching in these other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is good.

	Year 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Very high	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Progress since last inspection	Good
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Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement, especially of above-average students, due to good teaching
- Very good care and mentoring of students to improve their GCSE grades
- Good leadership with very good performance management
- Most student attitudes to work were good or very good, but a small number of lessons need improvement in behaviour management and in setting expectations about the quality of work

Commentary

Examination results

94. In 2003, Year 9 test results were very high – in the top five per cent nationally. Compared with other grammar schools, results were above average. In GCSE Double Award Science, results were significantly above average, although less so than in most other subjects within the school and with too many students attaining a D grade. In 2004, the D grades were reduced but still stood at an unacceptable fifteen, with three subject to appeal.

Standards and achievement

95. Standards observed in lessons and in work samples matched the results. There were many examples of very good work in all year groups, including very good standards in investigatory work and in literacy and numeracy. Above-average students were able to answer questions very well, work out examples in forces, power, electricity and kinetic energy; balance equations and work out empirical formulae; and research information on biological topics such as lymphocytes, nerves and hormones. However, in some work of 'average' and 'below-average' students, bearing in mind that such students are in fact well above the national average, the standards of presentation were unacceptably low. Such students were working below expectation and account for the degree of underachievement. The examples were found in a number of year groups, particularly Year 9 and in all the science disciplines; yet some teachers were able to minimise unsatisfactory work through good behaviour management.

Teaching and learning

96. Overall, teaching and learning are good. There are many examples of good practice. These include very good positive behaviour management (Year 8); very good use of individual whiteboards to assess learning, minute by minute (Year 11); very good writing frames to assist sentence generation in descriptions of the particle model (Year 7). Good aspects of teaching include promotion of skills (investigatory as well as literacy and numeracy), use of homework and sharing of learning objectives. Such good practice is found across biology, physics and chemistry and in the junior members of the department as well as in the more experienced. The use of ICT in teaching is developing; there are good examples, but use is still restricted by lack of access (and by a series of system failures during inspection week). Higher-attaining students are well catered for, especially where teachers give space for students to think for themselves, to brainstorm, to process information, through spider diagrams, and to prepare presentations. In a minority of cases, teachers did not risk such student independence; and teaching could then be mundane and unchallenging.

Leadership and management

97. Currently, departmental leadership is in transition, yet leadership and management are good overall. Very good aspects include the identification of the problems specified above. Very good targeting and mentoring of borderline students has begun to reduce the numbers who underachieve in science. Very good recruitment and training of new teachers has led to a very good balance of expertise and has improved the general quality of teaching. Improvements in Year 7 have led to a good curriculum, although there is some lack of consistency in other year groups. This is particularly so in marking, where the skill of communicating to students how to improve varies considerably from teacher to teacher. Text resources are good and contribute to achievement. Physics equipment has been developed recently. ICT resources are improving but have some way to go before students have full access. The accommodation has been improved and an additional laboratory is planned.
98. Since 1999, there has been progress in achievement and in the curriculum, including the development of investigation, and in resources, including ICT. Improvement, therefore, has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

The department offers a combined ICT/ PSHE programme in Year 7, and single lessons in Years 8 and 9; followed by a short course GCSE.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	n/a
Management	n/a
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE (short course) results are well above average and improving
- Technical problems plague the teaching and hinder achievement; the resources and the accommodation for ICT are inadequate
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work and make the best of opportunities offered
- Some teaching by inexperienced staff has weaknesses
- Systems to monitor students' progress are not linked sufficiently to the work
- Students can apply their ICT skills very well to work in other subjects when they have sufficient opportunities

Commentary

Examination results

99. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 are very high. GCSE results were well above average in 2003 and the most recent results show further improvement. The school enters the majority of students for the short course examination.

Standards and achievement

100. Above average Year 7 students gain understanding in the use of software to produce a storybook. In doing this work they consider the literacy needs of younger children. Technical issues hamper lessons; consequently some students have to share computers and cannot make enough progress. Work sampled in Year 8 showed that students are taught how to construct a spreadsheet, develop presentations and promotional materials. Students respond well to these tasks and use advanced functions and conditional formulas in their solutions. Work in Year 9 enables students to design a database. In a Year 9 lesson, taught in the learning resources centre, students were not able to advance in their knowledge of software sufficiently, because the teacher did not have any method of showing a demonstration on the computer and four students were unable to work because of computer faults. Despite these setbacks the students' excellent attitudes and motivation enable them to make the best of the opportunities offered.
101. GCSE students are able to design database and spreadsheet systems incorporating the use of visual basic programming to improve the features of their coursework. The best examples show additional work, mail merging and reports produced from information contained in the databases. Weaknesses in coursework centred on a lack of considering alternative approaches to solving problems, poor annotation of methods, and on-going evaluative thinking not linked sufficiently to the project requirements.

Teaching and learning

102. The recently combined ICT and PSHE course in Year 7 gives added opportunity to use ICT. However, teaching seen in Years 7 to 9 had some inconsistencies. In one very good lesson with very good subject knowledge, very good planning and high expectations, students learned well from each other because they listened to a range of viewpoints. In less successful lessons, students were not taught how to use the features of software that was unfamiliar to many. The insufficient direct teaching of ICT skills is a result of some less experienced teaching provided by non-specialist teachers. In another Year 9 lesson, the teacher talked for too long not allowing students to work on their databases sufficiently. Students do not have knowledge of the National Curriculum requirements for ICT because they are not referenced in the marking of work.
103. The GCSE short course is now taught by a smaller core of teachers, which enables better consistency. Differences in the depth of subject knowledge are still detectable in the work sample. Teaching in these years again varies in quality. In very good lessons firm, knowledgeable teaching combined with slick time management overcame many of the problems presented by the inadequate and overcrowded ICT room. In another lesson, students became easily disengaged from their learning because their off-task actions were not challenged. Homework is used well and e-mailed between home and school for completion.

Leadership and management

104. The school has recently appointed a new academic manager for the subject. The network manager has additional teaching responsibilities that sometimes cause conflicting demands. There is a newly established assessment and monitoring system, but at the time of the inspection no data had been entered to track students' progress. A new programme has been instigated for Year 7, clearly linked to the subject requirements; others do not yet have sufficient details to help teachers understand the requirements better. The strategic management of the ICT infrastructure does not have detailed plans or costs. At present the school has insufficient ICT resources.

ICT across the curriculum

105. Overall, students have good competence in using ICT. However, there are wide variations of use in subjects depending on the access to resources and rooms with computers. For example, in geography and mathematics when work is done, it is done very well; in the other half of the work sampled students had not used ICT. Very good work in Year 11 mathematics involved the use of graphic calculators, where all students were able to investigate mathematical equations. The school has a cross-curricular policy, but ICT did not feature strongly in the planning of English lessons. Science has made good use of Power-Point presentations in Year 9. In GCSE history and design and technology, much of the ICT is done at home. Younger students in these subjects do benefit and have a better understanding when ICT is used, for example in Year 8 history, when they used the internet to study the Black Death. Music has very competent users; but popular GCSE classes mean that students have to share access. The new buildings will give physical education and art and design access to ICT resources when completed.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Very high	Very high

Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high
- The partnership between teachers and students very effectively enhances achievement in most lessons
- A very good curriculum strongly promotes achievement
- The success of the department is strongly founded upon very effective leadership
- Access to ICT resources is limited

Commentary

Examination results

106. The results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2003, were very high. They were at a similar level in 2004. The 2003 GCSE results were very high, with all students gaining at least at C grade and the majority gaining A*/A. Results were almost as good in 2004, but with a very small number not securing A* to C. A much higher proportion of students choose geography than in most schools and they are generally a little more successful than in their other subjects, which is the reverse of the situation nationally.

Standards and achievement

107. Most students enter the school with standards that are well above average. By Year 9, the great majority achieve well in improving to the threshold of very high standards. Almost all students have considerable depth of knowledge about the places and the geographical themes that they have studied, which they express fluently in speaking and writing. Achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11, as standards are strongly consolidated at a very high level for a very substantial proportion of students. Because of very good fieldwork opportunities, most students have extensive capability to carry out independent investigation.

Teaching and Learning

108. In most lessons, teaching is very skilful in maintaining a balance that provides a relaxed and sensitive approach, but firm control and clear direction. This results in very good relationships that are very conducive to learning and give students the confidence to participate fully in discussions and independent work. Very well-planned tasks are effectively pitched to match the generally high capabilities of students. The result is that achievement is very good in most lessons and sometimes it is excellent. The response of students, which is generally very good and often excellent, makes a very significant contribution to their achievement. In a very small number of lessons, a more authoritarian approach to discipline and activities that are more teacher-led, result in students being less confident in volunteering and exploring ideas, and less able to make use of their existing knowledge and skills, gained for example in their primary schools. In these lessons, students achieve less well.

Leadership and management

109. The subject is managed in a very efficient and well-organised way, resulting in very effective monitoring and improvement of teaching and learning. The only significant remaining task is to ensure that all teaching matches the general quality. Leadership is very good, with some elements of excellence, for example in providing a very high quality teaching role model. A very effective staff team has been created, strongly equipped to contribute fully to the school's innovative vision for the continued improvement of the curriculum. When computers are used, they effectively enhance achievement, although access to resources does not always allow the department's commitment to ICT to be fully implemented. The last inspection identified very few areas in need of improvement. However, the department has succeeded in maintaining all areas of strength and further improving on most, so that achievement, learning and the curriculum are all now even stronger than they were.

History

Provision in history is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high
- Very good teaching builds on the very positive work ethic that students bring to lessons
- The regular marking of work informs students of what they have to do to improve
- The students' excellent attitudes ensure that they strive to do well in lessons
- A limited range of teaching methods and related materials are used and these do not encourage higher-level thinking in students
- Access to ICT equipment limits opportunities to reinforce learning

Commentary

Examination results

110. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were very high in relation to those reported nationally. At GCSE, results were far above expected national standards with over one-half of the students achieving the highest grades (A*/A). The most recent results were similar.

Standards and achievement

111. Current standards are similar to recent examination performance. Students are above average on entry in Year 7 and do very well because of clear teaching and stepped study materials. This standard is built on so that achievements are first rate by the end of Year 11.

Teaching and Learning

112. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9, where strong classroom management gives all students the detailed subject knowledge and confidence to acquire historical skills rapidly. Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11 where, for example during work on the 'romantic image of the cowboy' students used their positive work ethic to develop powerful writing and achieve exceptionally well. Teachers mark work regularly which motivates students to achieve very highly, but clear steps for students to improve are not given by all teachers in their feedback.
113. There is a strong sense of shared purpose and mutual respect in the classroom. The bilingual teaching (through German, Spanish and French) of Changes in Britain from 1750 –1900 to Year 9 students was excellent and allowed the highest-attaining students an opportunity to explore their history and language to a greater depth.

Leadership and management

114. The department is led and managed very well. The courses are well planned with clear student study guides and up-to-date textbooks. Much of the material is available on computers. The department has a clear vision for development, which includes increasing its access to ICT, to further develop students as independent learners.

115. Improvements since the last inspection have been very good. All students now benefit from clear notes and all students can judge their progress because of the wider use of National Curriculum targets. The introduction of the innovative Middle Year's International Baccalaureate in Year 7 is challenging the highest-attainers and promoting a greater spirit of enquiry amongst students. Year 7 students successfully used their enquiry skills to assess the impact of the past on the present location of Dartford.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Well above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 9, and very high for those who choose the subject as a full option at GCSE
- Students who continue with a full option course of GCSE, as well as those in Year 7 to 9 classes enjoy the moral and philosophical emphasis and achieve well, learning to argue and analyse effectively
- Lessons are scattered all over the school, and a number of non-specialists staff teach the subject in both Years 7 to 9 and the non-examined core in Years 10 to 11
- Specialist teachers have very good subject knowledge and teach and lead effectively, providing the structure for lessons that non-specialists will teach

Commentary

Examination results

116. For those who study the subject to GCSE level results in 2003 were very high, indicating very good achievement. The most recent results were similar.

Standards and achievement

117. Students enter the school with above-average attainment and a wide range of prior experiences of the subject. In Years 7 to 9, standards are well above expectation and students achieve well. For those students following the GCSE course standards are very high and they achieve very well. However, for those not taking the subject to examination level, standards are in line with those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Whilst students are provided with planned opportunities for discussion they seldom put their thoughts and views into writing. All students are given opportunities to talk about issues such as marriage and relationships, prejudice and discrimination. Students studying for GCSE in the subject make good progress in developing analytical and critical skills.

Teaching and Learning

118. In Years 7 to 9, all students are taught well to write concisely and objectively about abstract topics, such as arguments on creation and evolution, or different models of morality. There is a wider range of experience within Years 10 to 11. Non-examination classes are often taught by non-specialist teachers, with a variety of skills and subject knowledge and this results in some

inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning. GCSE classes are taught well by specialist teachers, with some examples of very good lessons supported by plentiful resources and good examination preparation. In these lessons, students learn well how to put views and judgements into clear tables and concise prose.

Leadership and Management

119. Leadership and management are good. Teaching is good and the work of non-specialist teachers is managed well. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students attain well above average standards by the end of their GCSE course
- Very good marking and assessment procedures enable students to improve their work
- Students' coursework is of a high standard
- Examination courses are well structured to enable students to meet examination requirements
- Some lesson planning lacks sufficient detail to ensure good pace, high expectation and a high level of challenge
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 does not enable students to access the higher National Curriculum levels
- Limited use is made of computers in designing and manufacturing

Commentary

Examination results

120. In 2003, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average, but the high proportion of the highest grades awarded appears to have been over estimated. GCSE results overall, were well above the national average for A* to C and A* to G grades. The proportion of students attaining A* and A grades was also well above the national average but well below the proportion gained by students in their other subjects. The improving trend in the 2003 results was maintained in 2004. In 2003, the best results were for graphics products but results in the three subjects taken at examination level have varied considerably over the last three years.

Standards and achievement

121. Current Year 9 work indicates standards are above average. Students develop their designing and making skills progressively as they move through Years 7 to 9, and overall, achievement is good. They take part in research, develop ideas and use good recording skills. However, the nature of the tasks set restricts students' opportunities to demonstrate higher levels of designing skills. Knowledge and skills develop through using a range of materials and techniques in set tasks. Practical work is good but coursework folders are often not well organised and kept. The well-structured courses in Years 10 and 11 enable most students to meet the requirements of the examination well and, overall, achievement is very good. Most students produce well presented coursework, which contains good research and developmental work. Presentation and recording skills are very good. Practical work

demonstrates students' ability to use the limited resources available to produce well-finished final products. Students use computers in the presentation of course work but there is insufficient use of computer-aided design and manufacturing.

Teaching and learning

122. Students have the benefit of knowledgeable teachers. Courses are well structured and planned. Teaching methods are at least satisfactory. Students develop appropriate knowledge and skills as they progress through the school but are not always sufficiently challenged to use their potential to the full. Students develop positive attitudes to their work because they are well managed and most have respect for their own work and the contributions of others. Students show good levels of concentration, particularly when involved in practical work. Many spend a lot of time in presenting their coursework to a high standard and homework is used well to reinforce learning. Marking and assessment procedures are thorough. Very good individual support in lessons and very good written comments in teachers' reviews of ongoing work enable students to improve their work.

Leadership and management

123. Leadership and management are good. An effective team approach has been established and good use is made of the limited available resources. Departmental documentation is good with detailed programmes of work. However, although there is good breadth in the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 the current programme does not provide students with sufficient opportunities to attain the higher National Curriculum levels. Planning for inclusion of cross-curricular issues is limited and the use of computers to support students' learning is underdeveloped. Assessment procedures are very good. Accommodation and resources are barely satisfactory but used well.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Provision in art and design is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	n/a
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11 and students achieve well
- Students are keen to learn as a result of challenging and enthusiastic teaching
- The department is moving forward with new developments, including accommodation and staff
- ICT opportunities for students in Years 7 to 9 have not been fully developed

Commentary

Examination results

124. Results in the GCSE examinations have been well above average in recent years. However, the most recent results showed some decline. Careful analysis of the results has identified areas which require attention and appropriate action has been taken.

Standards and achievement

125. Students enter the school in Year 7 with a wide range of prior attainment. They achieve well during Years 7 to 9, and by the end of Year 9 standards are above average. Students make good progress in learning new skills, using a variety of media. The development of drawing is

a strength. Students enjoy their work and discuss it enthusiastically using key words, which demonstrate good knowledge of the subject. Current GCSE students demonstrate high standards of work. They experiment with a range of two-dimensional materials, including printmaking, collage and mixed media. Students are able to relate their own work to the work of other artists and use sketchbooks well.

Teaching and Learning

126. Schemes of work are well planned and clear learning objectives are set in lessons, enabling students to understand what they need to learn. The pace of lessons is good, ensuring that students are suitably challenged and work productively. Teachers encourage students to put forward their own ideas and talk through what they are doing. Students analyse their own work well in sketchbooks. They are clear as to how to make progress in their work. Teachers' marking and assessment are informative. Homework and sketchbooks are used effectively to reinforce learning. Students relate very well to each other in lessons and demonstrate positive behaviour and attitudes. Full use is made of the Mick Jagger Centre on site. Teachers give students the opportunity to view the continually changing exhibition programme of contemporary art and this supports students' learning very well. In one lesson observed, students made connections between the drawing work they were doing, based on the school building, and a variety of artists' work on show in the centre.

Leadership and Management

127. A new subject leader is in post so it is not possible to make a judgement on leadership. Staff who have been very recently appointed offer a range of specialist skills. The department is developing a good sense of teamwork. A clear understanding of the strengths of the department and what needs to be done to move forward is in place. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Teachers are more aware of National Curriculum requirements. The new specialist accommodation offers great potential for the subject to expand and develop, including the area of ICT, where students have had limited opportunities up to now in Years 7 to 9.

Music

Provision in music is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	High	Very high
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to very good achievement in Years 10 and 11
- Music has a high profile in the school because of very good leadership
- There is very good use of ICT to support learning
- Teaching does not always cater for the needs of the highest-attaining students

Commentary

Examination results

128. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were very high. The latest results show further improvement with no student gaining less than a grade B.

Standards and achievement

129. Standards at the end of Year 9 are high and this represents good achievement because standards on entry to the school are just above average. By the end of Year 9, students create effective compositions drawing on their understanding of chords, scales, and musical devices. They understand the features of a range of styles and are able to evaluate their work. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are very high. The standard of the highest-attaining students is well above that required for the highest grade at GCSE. This represents very good achievement. Students use ICT confidently to create and refine compositions. They identify features of music accurately when listening, and review their work perceptively.

Teaching and learning

130. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good and in Years 10 and 11 it is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and high expectations. The best lessons are very well paced, and much is learned within the short lesson span. In almost all lessons, students behave well and work hard. However, where the activity is too easy, or presented in a way that does not interest them, students quickly lose motivation and behaviour becomes unsatisfactory. In all years, work is very thoroughly marked. Very good use is made of homework to reinforce and extend what has been learned. Sometimes the highest-attaining students are not challenged enough, and are made to revisit concepts that they already know well. The excellent ICT resource is very well used to help students to learn. The acoustic instruments used in the classroom are not of good quality. Other teaching resources are barely adequate, and the portable audio players used in some rooms give a poor quality of sound.

Leadership and management

131. Visionary and committed leadership has brought about innovative developments which have raised the profile of music in the school and local community. Standards of extra-curricular work are very high. The school provides very good opportunities for students to learn to play instruments, and to engage in music making. The subject is very well staffed. Improvement since the time of the previous inspection has been good. Strong links with partner schools are now well developed. The subject is gaining in popularity.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching enables students to achieve very well and reach high standards in a variety of activities
- The excellent provision for and take up of extra-curricular sport enhances and enriches the curriculum programme
- Very good leadership and management of the department has brought about an ethos for full participation and learning
- The introduction of a GCSE course for all students has enhanced the status of the subject and indicated the value placed on it by the school
- Not enough opportunities are given to students in Years 7 and 8 to take some responsibility for their own learning

Commentary

Examination results

132. It is not possible to make national comparisons with GCSE results in physical education because 2004 was the first time the school entered students for the examination and the national results are not yet available. However, it is likely that the school's results will be well above the national average.

Standards and achievement

133. By the end of Year 9 standards overall are well above average, both in physical skills and in understanding of principles in different sports and in health and fitness. For example, in rugby students understand how and where to pass, how to send and receive the ball accurately and can demonstrate these principles and techniques in a competitive situation. The standard of physical skills and competence of students when they enter the school is broadly average so this represents very good achievement. This is maintained through Years 10 and 11 so that by the end of Year 11 standards are well above average in both theory and practical performance. Students are very articulate and discuss with conviction and understanding issues surrounding the social aspects of sport. They also demonstrate a good level of ability in analysing movement in order to improve performance.

Teaching and learning

134. Overall teaching is very good although it is slightly stronger in Years 9, 10 and 11 than in Years 7 and 8. Expectations of participation and of the amount of work which can be accomplished in a lesson are consistently high, throughout all years. In Years 7 and 8, not enough opportunities were seen of students being given responsibility for their own learning, for example in leading sections of warm-up sessions. However, in one Year 7 lesson, students were encouraged to set the targets for their lesson and discussed at the end how well they had met those targets. This was an example of excellent teaching technique which enabled the students to focus on what they were trying to achieve and learning was therefore very good. Students' attitudes to physical education are very good and this, together with very good teaching, leads to very good learning taking place. This is evident in both the examination and the team results. The excellent provision for and participation in extra-curricular sports considerably enhances and enriches the curriculum programme.

Leadership and management

135. Very good leadership and management of the department have brought about an ethos for learning and participation which is enabling all students to achieve success, whatever their needs or aptitudes. The introduction of a GCSE course in physical education for all students indicates the value placed by the school on the subject.

136. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Standards have improved in all areas of the department's work as a result of very good teaching and leadership.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	n/a

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The planning of the programme of study is good and makes a very good contribution to the school ethos

- Teaching in some tutorial and PSHE lessons was very good
- The contributions from subjects are not clearly communicated

Commentary

137. During the week of the inspection no lessons were seen that were specifically attributed to the subject but several lessons, tutorials and PSHE sessions were observed that contributed to the wider aims of the course. The school has an established curriculum for citizenship and a selection of students' books was made available. The subject is assessed against end of key stage descriptions and reported annually to parents.
138. In Years 7 to 11, citizenship is taught in conjunction with the PSHE programme and ICT as well as in several subjects. The overall provision offered in the school has a number of strengths that contribute very positively to the school ethos. Amongst these is the strong commitment to serving others and the development of national and international perspectives through specialist language status. The curriculum is modelled around these key components and they recur in lessons, assemblies and tutorials. A good example was seen in a Year 7 tutorial session where boys were developing their international understanding by planning an assembly with a European theme. Being a specialist language school, boys decided to begin the presentation in a foreign language!
139. Students join the school willing and eager to participate in class and group activities. As they get older they play a bigger part in the life of the school and wider community and demonstrate good, and at times very good achievement. A high proportion enrolls onto the Duke of Edinburgh programme, take part in charity events or work with younger students.
140. Much of the teaching in PSHE was good or very good. Tutors were excellent role-models. The quality of relationships was found to be a strength of many sessions. Teachers had a very secure understanding of course components and have benefited from the preparations and training that preceded the changes to the content and delivery of the pastoral curriculum.
141. The co-ordination of citizenship is effectively managed and very well led.
142. The curriculum is appropriately sign-posted throughout the PSHE curriculum and acknowledged through different activities, like the school council and boys' involvement in community action and service. Within the wider curriculum and subjects, the citizenship elements need a sharper focus so boys become more familiar with the components and better able to compile their portfolios.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, thirteen 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 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	12	100	65.2	25.0	11.1	34.2	20.6
Business studies	6	100	76.4	16.7	16.3	38.3	26.2
Chemistry	12	75.0	72.7	8.3	13.9	24.2	24.1
Classical studies	7	85.7	87.4	14.3	34.3	27.1	35.2
English language	3	100	82.9	33.3	17.5	36.7	28.7
French	8	87.5	78.2	0.0	18.9	25.0	27.6
Design and technology	6	100	74.9	33.3	15.1	41.7	25.3
General studies	20	100	73.9	25.0	17.8	34.5	25.7
Geography	8	100	74.3	37.5	19.8	40.0	26.5
German	5	100	81.5	20.0	19.3	38.0	28.9
History	4	75.0	80.7	50.0	19.5	37.5	28.6
Mathematics	21	38.1	61.9	0.0	17.1	11.9	22.1
Other sciences	6	100	71.4	83.3	15.8	48.3	24.3
Other social studies	1	0.0	24.1	0.0	16.7	0.0	24.1
Physics	9	55.6	68.6	0.0	14.4	20.0	22.7
Religious studies	2	100	80.2	50.0	22.6	45.0	29.8
Spanish	1	100	78.5	0.0	17.7	40.0	27.3

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design		100	98.6	40	50.2	80.0	87.5
Biology	16	100	96.4	56.3	39.2	87.5	78.6
Business studies	29	100	98.7	55.2	36.8	89.7	80.1
Chemistry	21	100	97.6	57.1	49.0	92.4	84.9
Classical studies	18	100	99.5	16.7	55.9	73.3	90.9
English language	29	100	99.4	55.2	36.3	93.8	80.9
English literature	20	100	99.5	80.0	46.5	103.0	86.5
French	7	100	98.8	57.1	51.5	91.4	87.6
Design and technology	8	100	97.8	37.5	35.0	77.5	77.9
General studies	47	95.7	94.7	44.7	31.0	82.6	73.1

Geography	21	100	98.7	71.4	44.5	102.9	84.0
Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
German	3	100	98.4	66.7	47.9	100	84.8
History	29	100	99.0	75.9	44.6	95.9	84.6
Mathematics	39	92.3	96.7	61.5	55.6	91.3	88.8
Music	5	100	98.8	20.0	38.9	84.0	81.1
Other languages	1	100	96.9	100	64.5	100	93.8
Other sciences	1	100	97.3	100	41.5	120	80.3
Other social studies	10	100	97.4	70.0	42.7	94.0	81.8
Physics	25	100	96.7	36.0	44.6	82.4	81.7
Religious studies	12	100	98.8	66.7	46.7	100.0	85.6
Spanish	8	100	98.3	50.0	50.2	82.5	86.9

International Baccalaureate results

Number of students entered during the school year	Percentage of those students achieving the diploma	Percentage of those candidates awarded the certificate
80	99	1

Higher level

Subject	Entries	Average Grade (School)	Average Grade (Worldwide)
English	40	5.40	4.92
French	9	5.00	5.20
German	5	5.40	5.86
Latin	3	6.00	5.50
Spanish	3	6.00	5.70
Business & Management	18	5.28	4.74
Geography	27	6.19	5.03
History	31	5.68	5.03
Biology	24	6.13	4.40
Chemistry	24	5.00	4.74
Physics	19	4.58	4.68
Mathematics	18	4.89	4.76
Music	3	6.00	4.73
Theatre Arts	8	6.00	4.91
Visual Arts	8	4.25	4.68

Standard level

Subject	Entries	Average Grade (School)	Average Grade (Worldwide)
English	40	5.60	4.86
French	14	4.43	4.69
German	5	4.20	4.97

Italian <i>ab initio</i>	3	5.00	4.38
Japanese <i>ab initio</i>	15	4.00	5.22
Latin	7	4.00	3.90
Mandarin <i>ab initio</i>	2	7.00	5.67
Subject	Entries	Average Grade (School)	Average Grade (Worldwide)
Russian	1	6.00	5.69
Spanish	17	4.65	5.12
Business & Management	9	5.11	4.76
Geography	7	6.43	4.60
History	4	6.50	5.13
ITGS	11	4.91	4.42
Biology	13	5.15	4.44
Chemistry	15	4.93	4.91
Physics	9	4.22	4.45
Design Technology	2	5.00	4.79
Mathematics- Methods	5	5.80	4.95
Mathematics- Studies	57	5.42	4.76
Music Composition	1	7.00	4.49
Visual Arts	3	4.25	4.68

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The school offers AS and A-level courses in English literature and a range of modern languages, and the IB Diploma in English, French, German, Spanish, Japanese, Italian, Russian, Arabic and Chinese.

The focus was on A-level and IB English literature, A-level French, and IB German and Spanish. In addition, A-level Spanish, and Italian and Russian for the IB were sampled. In the Year 12 Spanish lesson, teaching and learning were very good. The native-speaking teacher is very good at finding alternative words to clarify understanding and Spanish is well established as the means of communication. Humour is used effectively to make sympathetic corrections; students enjoy the subject and standards are well above average. In the satisfactory Year 13 Italian lesson sampled, competent and fluent teaching enabled students to make appropriate progress and to develop skills of listening and speaking satisfactorily. The Year 13 Russian lesson was very good because the use of different cases was explained through examples rather than rules. Discussion related to students' aspirations and interests and they demonstrated good pronunciation and intonation.

English

Provision in English is excellent.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Very high
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Excellent

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Progress since last inspection	Very good
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Main strengths

- Consistent exam results that are well above the national average at A-level and worldwide average at IB
- Teachers' high expectations, excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm for literature enable students on both courses to learn very well
- Students reach very high standards in writing and handle the terminology of literary criticism very well
- Reading skills are very well developed in the interpretation and evaluation of a range of challenging texts with an international perspective
- The monitoring of standards and results is very effective

Commentary

Examination results

143. Results for English literature at A-level in 2003 were very high with nearly all students gaining the highest grades A and B. The most recent results are not quite as high because there was a decrease in the number who were awarded grade B. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is above average, with the highest-attaining students at GCSE opting for the IB course. Results in the IB higher and standard level courses are consistently well above the worldwide average grade. Since 2002 the number of students taking the higher level has increased rapidly.

Standards and achievement

144. Inspection evidence indicates that the large number of students taught in the department are making very good progress and achieving very well in relation to their varying starting points. Current standards overall are very high.

Teaching and learning

145. Overall, teaching, teachers' subject knowledge and their understanding of the examination requirements are excellent. In the six lessons seen, teaching was never less than good, most being very good and many with outstanding features. High quality questioning encourages students to explore and extend their first response. In the best lessons, teachers facilitate discussion without dominating students' views. For example, Year 13 A-level students debate confidently how language is used to show Joe's state of mind in 'Enduring Love'. IB students reflect on the didactic techniques used by Brecht in 'Mother Courage' and reach the conclusion that there are no winners in war. Teachers have high expectations for students to be accurate and detailed in their written analysis of texts, but do not always challenge their oral skills. On occasions, students' comments to the class are inaudible and teachers take over discussions so that valuable ideas are not lost. This limits opportunities for students to rehearse their ideas or learn from each other in preparation for oral assessments.
146. Very well prepared coursework materials enable students to become independent learners. They provide enrichment for the highest-attaining students and support for the lower-attainers. Students are conscientious about completing revision books with key points and annotated references to help them prepare for examinations. Work in students' files shows that they make rapid gains in the use of critical vocabulary. AS students make a clear analysis of Carter's use of fairy tales to create tension and heighten the reader's response to the unexpected in 'The Bloody Chamber'. By Year 13, their writing is fluent, well informed and analytical.
147. IB students work collaboratively to explore links between texts and across genres. They enjoy the challenge of bringing other subjects into their study of literature and think carefully about language in translation. They use relevant background research in essays about enclosure and imprisoned lives in works by Ibsen and Lorca. Students feel that the experience of research for their extended essay, for which they are given a week off timetable is particularly beneficial.

They value the support given them as well as the opportunity to visit major libraries such as the Senate House.

148. Students have very good access to the internet and a small but high quality collection of books that support their critical studies and wider reading through the Learning Resource Centre. The majority of students come to lessons with very well prepared notes and this contributes to the rapid pace of learning. Students, especially those new to the school, are well inducted into the reading requirements of the courses. Guidance includes additional information for those who intend to continue the subject at university. Students enjoy attending seminars and debates to hear the views of others, and take part in a wide range of enrichment activities such as Theatre Club.

Leadership and management

149. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Staff are encouraged to teach to their expertise so their commitment and enthusiasm are evident. Students recognise that staff have a passion for the subject. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The department has successfully managed the transition from teaching traditional A-level courses to the very popular IB programme. The challenge is to maintain such high standards with students who are required to study both the humanities and the sciences.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

150. The approach to teaching language and literacy through other subjects in the sixth form is an extension of the excellent provision in Years 12 and 13, but it is determined by departmental rather than school policy. Effective work was seen in subjects such as English, chemistry, geography, theory of knowledge and business studies, where teachers expect students to acquire and use a high level of technical vocabulary in well prepared essays and presentations. There is good development of communications skills in art, biology, ICT. However, student input in discussions is not sustained in lessons in mathematics, biology, design and technology and geography. The monitoring of students' work in biology and ICT shows limited understanding of the teacher's role in developing literacy skills; work in folders is of variable quality, poorly presented and spelling of key words not corrected.

French

Provision in French is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent and consistent use is made by all teachers of the target language and of authentic resources
- Students achieve very well relation to their prior attainment
- Opportunities for student use of ICT are very good
- Students in the first year of study lack confidence in coping with constant target language teaching

Commentary

Examination results

151. Results in 2003 were above average and the most recent results are similar. Girls performed slightly better than boys in gaining the highest grades.

Standards and achievement

152. Current standards show improvement because the department has analysed areas for development, such as teachers becoming examiners, and has initiated change including more exam-related tasks marked to exam board standards. Students are aware of what is needed to reach each grade. Students in Year 13 understand the teachers' fluent French and are keen to access top grades by fine-tuning their performance. In a complex listening passage about relationships within a family, they could deduce both gist and detail as well as readily giving opinions on well-chosen material relevant to the life and interests of their age group.
153. Year 12 students achieve very well in relation to the good standards at GCSE with which they start the course. Teachers again facilitate progress by sensitivity to student needs and use of resources readily accessible to all. Opportunities to use ICT include PowerPoint presentations, e-mail, the Internet and word-processing.

Teaching and learning

154. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use positive comment, and carefully thought-out, graduated challenge to bring out the best in students, as in a difficult listening passage where correct answers were carefully elicited. Students respond to the teacher's belief in them and feel that their approachability facilitates learning. Teachers constantly encourage students, thereby helping them to overcome initial weaknesses such as hesitancy in use of the target language for longer utterances. Early immersion in speaking and listening activities helps develop these skills to the appropriate level. Good coverage of grammar and idiom provides a solid foundation for progress. Students' work is thoroughly corrected. By Year 13, students are even more enthusiastic about the value of language learning and contribute readily in class. They know how languages can be linked into careers in a variety of fields.

Leadership and management

155. Leadership is very good. There is a keen awareness of what is happening in the department with excellent support from senior management. Results are analysed thoroughly and used to inform progress. Management is good. Encouragement and a positive approach set the standard for the department. An excellent staff handbook has detailed guidelines on assessment and marking. Wide-ranging management responsibilities place a significant workload on the hard-working, enthusiastic head of department.
156. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department has expanded and is working on strategies to raise the achievement of the highest-attainers and increase the number of A grades at GCE.

German

Provision in German is good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good

Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths

- Good teaching with a wide variety of teaching methods results in good learning and achievement
- Teachers' fluent German develops students' listening skills well
- Students are very well motivated and keen to learn
- Assessment is rigorous and regular and provides very good guidance as to how students can improve

Commentary

Examination results

157. In the IB in 2004, all students gained a minimum of four points on a one to seven point scale. In comparison with worldwide figures, results at higher level were above average and for standard level students were slightly below average.

Standards and achievement

158. Current Year 13 standards are in line with course expectations. Students achieve well overall. In the higher level group standards are above average and students achieve very well. They understand the teacher's fluent use of German and most are working towards the highest grades. They analyse television and radio adverts and assess why it is that some are more effective than others. Evidence in exercise books shows very rapid progress in a comprehensive body of work built up over the past year, ranging from discussion of holidays in the past tense at the beginning of the course to complex analysis of Saddam Hussein's motives by December of that year. In the standard level group, standards are average for this stage of the course and students achieve satisfactorily. Although students understand the teacher's use of German they are reluctant to use it for themselves and require considerable support both with their oral and written work.
159. In the Year 12 group standards are higher. Students have made a good start to the IB course and they are achieving highly in relation to their various starting points. With the exception of a small minority, most members of the class keep up with the teacher's very fast pace and high expectations and understand the teacher's fluent German. They move swiftly from GCSE type essays to work on relationships. They participate in discussion about roles within the family and are building up a bank of extended vocabulary and complex structures.

Teaching and learning

160. Teaching and learning range from excellent to satisfactory, but are good overall. Students make good progress and achieve well. In the best lessons, sharp focused questioning brings all students into the discussion at their own particular level and ample opportunities are provided for pair and individual work. There is a sense of everyone working together to achieve the very highest results. Very careful marking and rapid return of work mean that students know immediately how well they are doing and what it is they must do to improve. Students' very good attitudes to their work also enhance their achievement.

Leadership and management

161. Leadership and management are good. Good schemes of work have been developed and students are supported by regular trips abroad and foreign language assistants. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Both standards and the numbers of students taking the course have risen.

Spanish

Provision in Spanish is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Excellent
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results have improved steadily, with more higher grades (6/7) being gained in recent years
- The overall quality of teaching observed was excellent
- Students are enthusiastic about language learning, and benefit from many opportunities to enrich their studies
- Classes do not always have access to appropriate resources during lessons

Commentary

Examination results

162. Results for Spanish at higher level in 2004 were well above average in comparison with worldwide figures, although at standard level they were slightly below average. No student gained less than four points. The 100 per cent pass rate has been maintained for the last three years, with a rising trend in the number of students entered for the examinations at both levels.

Standards and achievement

163. Students make very good progress in Spanish: they rapidly improve their skills, and acquire the more complex language required at this level. The transition from GCSE is managed carefully, and students new to the school quickly adjust to the requirements of the course. The number of students joining the course from other schools has increased: these students soon progress at a similar rate to those whom they are joining. In their written work, students can express complex ideas using an increasingly sophisticated range of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions: any mistakes rarely impede communication. Students achieve very well taking account of their prior attainment.

Teaching and learning

164. Teachers provide an excellent model for students to imitate in their use of Spanish as the primary medium for classroom communication. They develop an excellent rapport with their students who in general cope well with the fast pace and challenging nature of the work. Students gain an appreciation of current issues such as immigration in Spanish-speaking countries, as well as of literary classics such as the poetry of Lorca. Staff provide them with opportunities to develop their confidence through group and pair work. In role play in a mixed sex Year 12 class, students gave a delightful example of social interaction and the use of language for real purposes when they clearly enjoyed enacting the roles of young people meeting for the first time in a night club. Too many lessons however are timetabled in rooms with no supporting resources, such as audio-visual aids and equipment, or dictionaries. This restricts the variety of activities which teachers can schedule. Marking and assessment are extremely thorough, indicating current levels of attainment, challenging but realistic targets, and detailed advice about how to attain them. Students pay tribute to the very high quality of the teaching they receive, and to the dedication of their teachers in giving them extra help when required.

Leadership and management

165. Leadership is outstanding, and management is very effective. Clear schemes of work have been devised which cater for the needs of students with a range of abilities and meet external assessment requirements. Students benefit from the availability of a wide range of materials including videos, books, magazines and dictionaries in the Learning Resources Centre. They understand the cross-curricular, international dimension of the IB course, and appreciate the importance of language learning in promoting international understanding. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, in particular, the improvement in results together with the increase in the number of students taking the course.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are highly motivated, work hard and achieve well
- The teachers' knowledge and experience contribute substantially to good achievement
- Good developments include graphic calculators, additional support and on-line resources
- In too many lessons, the students are not involved in discussion to develop understanding

Commentary

Examination results

166. Results in mathematics at A-level were above average in 2003 and standards were maintained in 2004. Results in IB mathematics have improved and overall are ahead of the worldwide averages. The strongest 2004 IB results were in the mathematics-studies course at standard level. Since the last inspection the issue of underachievement of higher-attaining students has been largely dealt with.

Standards and achievement

167. Students have a good choice of mathematics courses within the A-level and IB provision. Analysis shows that overall by the end of courses, students achieve well taking account of their prior attainment. In both A-level and IB, the students learn and apply techniques confidently and accurately. Algebraic skills are built up strongly and applied well – as when Year 13 IB students had to simplify difficult algebraic expressions when learning a method of differentiating. The students are confident and methodical in using the skills they have learnt. For example in IB portfolio work of high quality, a student used matrices and trigonometry to analyse the rotation of a rectangle, another used vectors to explore planes and lines in three dimensions. In both A-level and IB lessons, the students achieve well because they work hard and the teachers demonstrate high standards of mathematical rigour.

Teaching and learning

168. The quality of teaching seen in lessons ranged from excellent to satisfactory. The teachers' knowledge and experience, their high expectations and the hard work of students ensure achievement is good on most sixth form mathematics courses. In a Year 12 IB lesson introducing the calculus, students were given a useful historical background and everyday relevance for the mathematics about to be learnt. Most of the teaching promotes confidence and enjoyment. The teachers' positive relations with the students lead are productive - as in a concluding lesson on logic when the students skilfully applied what they had learnt. In a very good Year 13 IB lesson the students' learning of statistics was enlivened by the practical use of graphic calculators to display data and graphs. Although students respond to the teachers' questioning very well and learn effectively, they are little involved in any class discussion about ideas and methods, which limits their confidence and understanding. In too many lessons,

students spent the majority of the time listening and copying notes or examples off the board. However, the students have excellent attitudes and are diligent in completing their work.

Leadership and management

169. Leadership, overall, is setting high expectations of both staff and students. Results are analysed and strengths and weaknesses identified. Planning and development of the mathematics courses for both A-level and IB are good. Good current developments include the guidance of students onto the appropriate IB courses, the introduction of graphic calculators to improve learning styles, and the introduction of on-line material to enhance sixth form mathematics. Also, the provision of additional expert help for students is a very good initiative aimed to benefit in particular the higher and lower achievers.

SCIENCE

The focus was on biology and chemistry A-level and physics IB, but lessons in IB chemistry and AS physics were sampled. In the chemistry lesson, students learned well and showed good achievement in IB standard level. These students were of average ability in science but were able to make good progress in understanding of the mole concept because of good teaching and small class size. Students at the higher level were seen planning and carrying out an investigation on rates of reaction at the highest level of coursework. In the AS physics lesson on basic electrical circuits, the experienced physics teacher successfully conveyed her interest in the subject. As a result of the good teaching, levels of learning and achievement were good, resulting in above average levels of attainment. Marking of the students' work was particularly thorough and the guidance given enabled them to make good progress.

Biology

Provision in biology is good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good subject knowledge and use their experience to enhance student learning
- Students achieve very well due to good teaching and their very good attitudes
- Regular testing helps students to improve
- Insufficient use is made of ICT as a teaching tool to aid students' learning

Commentary

Examination results

170. Results for this course are improving. In 2002, results were above average and in 2003 were well above average. The most recent results are similar.
171. The majority of students opting for the AS/A2 course are science specialists, many of whom have set their sights on a career in medical sciences. The number of students opting for A-level biology has risen in 2004, with 50 enrolled in the current Year 12.

Standards and achievement

172. Analysis shows that overall by the end of courses students achieve very well taking account of their prior attainment. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Students are able to evaluate the methodology of a prescribed experiment and modify it to ensure a successful outcome. Their interpretation of the results demonstrated a secure understanding of the investigation. They have a good understanding of the structure of monosaccharides and the significance of hydroxyl groups in determining the solubility of the sugars.

Teaching and learning

173. The quality of teaching and learning is good or very good in most of the lessons. All students are taught by subject specialists, who have a very good knowledge of the subject and are able to draw on considerable experience. Students are made aware of risks involved in laboratory experiments and health and safety requirements are reinforced during practical work. The teachers used a diversity of resources to stimulate learning. They respond quickly and accurately to students' comments and queries. Students are given a diversity of tasks to undertake during lessons and a variety of teaching styles maintain their interest. Relationships between the teacher and students and within the group were very good. Group work is used particularly effectively. Students have a very good attitude and know they can turn to their teachers for help. Students enjoy this subject and most Year 13 students want to continue studying a course with a high biological science content when they leave school.
174. Students present their written work well and there are clear guidelines about what they needed to do to improve their grades. In fieldwork reports, data is analysed using a spreadsheet and presented using a word processor. Student progress is monitored and regular assessment assures that they are kept on target for their predicted grade. Moderation of coursework is excellent and coursework marks submitted to the examination board are consistently in line with the required standards.
175. Although students have the opportunity to use data loggers in the laboratory, overall insufficient use is made of ICT as a teaching tool to aid students' learning.

Leadership and management

176. Leadership and management are good. Good teamwork is evident with sharing of ideas and experience. This allows dissemination of good practice and common aims enabling the department to run smoothly. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. Management is good with effective technical support for teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is good.

	Years12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths

- Very good achievement with a rise in standards since the previous inspection
- Very good teaching and learning
- Good attitudes to work and very good attitudes to the subject

Commentary

Results

177. In 2003, results were above average at AS and well above average at A2, with all students passing and over half getting A and B grades.

Standards and achievement

178. The standards of work seen at this stage were above average but were on course to maintain the standards of the previous year. This amounts to very good achievement. The number of girls was not large enough for statistical analysis, but in classes they were attaining at least as well as the boys. They, and minority ethnic students, participated actively in all parts of the lessons. Student behaviour was very good and their independence and participation in discussion were good. Laboratory skills were good and cooperation was very good. They were able to answer questions on the properties of the alkanes that revealed a good level of recall of the experiments and of the theory that underlay them. Year 13 students were adept at practical work (on the reactions of transition metals), although they were not using very imaginative descriptive language for their observations. Their paired discussion on the reason the salts were coloured revealed a very good understanding of electron orbitals and their interactions with photons of different wavelength.

Teaching and Learning

179. Teachers are very knowledgeable and complemented each other well. One of the dominating features is precision of language and thought, (for example on change of stage in homologous series) insisted on and promoted by teachers. A good range of teaching techniques is in use including thorough interrogation of data (on boiling points) and a good balance of practical work. Very clear and accurate explanations are given, which most students, most of the time, are able to follow with understanding. There were very good teaching resources in use, influenced by the theory of knowledge course. Very good planning was extended to the detail of who should be asked the questions, e.g. on fractional distillation. The use of homework was good and the use of ICT was developing. The department was characterised by honesty and openness to change on the part of teachers.

Leadership and management

180. Leadership and management are good. Results have risen from broadly average in the previous inspection to well above average now and numbers in both A-level and IB have risen. Improvement has been good.

Physics

Provision in physics is satisfactory.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	n/a

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results have improved and are now above the world average
- Teaching generally lacks flair and so fails to fully enthuse the students
- Current levels of achievement for these able students are only broadly satisfactory

- The department contains a team of well-qualified specialist teachers having a shared commitment to the success of the department

Commentary

Examination results

181. The 2003 results in both the standard and higher syllabus courses were disappointing, with a substantial proportion of the students only gaining the lower level three and level four grades. This was especially true of the standard course entrants. In both groups there were significant levels of underachievement, which contrasts with far better performances in chemistry and particularly in biology. However, the latest 2004 results from a reduced number of students show a much-improved performance. All these students in the standard and higher syllabus courses gaining level five to seven passes. These pass grades indicate positive achievement levels and physics had better values than chemistry. The average point score for physics, as with chemistry and biology, was better than the worldwide average.

Standards and achievement

182. In lessons, students are clearly well motivated as they have selected these IB courses in preference to the alternative A and AS level options. They show a high level of concentration in the topics taught, though active participation in answering questions and in discussions is less than expected. Overall, levels of understanding are good, though recall of earlier information is at a lower level. In a Year 13 higher level lesson, they could apply Fleming's rules to electron beams in magnetic fields and manipulate equations. However, a clear understanding of the meaning of symbols was sometimes missing. In a Year 13 standard level lesson on circuits, basic principles were understood, but most students were unable to correctly calculate a resistivity value from available data. In Year 12, students could relate measured quantities to base units, but in a practical lesson on the simple pendulum few students had considered the effect of the bob on the measured length. A sampled student file showed very well presented work, consisting of clear and accurate lesson notes with practice calculations that were thoroughly marked. These observations suggest that most students are making satisfactory progress. However, in the work seen there were few opportunities for extended writing or use of ICT skills.

Teaching and learning

183. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching was satisfactory, as it was secure and accurate and conducted at an appropriate pace by knowledgeable specialist teachers. Lesson content was adequately pitched, though the level of intellectual challenge could have been further developed for these able students. A feature of the lessons seen was the lack of any real input that would enhance the learning and so stimulate the students desire to gain a deeper interest in the subject. Due to this, levels of learning and achievement were only judged to be satisfactory.

Leadership and management

184. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The reasons for the poor results in 2003 have been carefully analysed. These were partly due to staffing changes and a failure to follow the coursework guidelines fully. Appropriate action has now been taken and when the planned ICT suite for the department is completed the department will be in a better position to continue with the improvements sought. The work of the team of four IB teachers and of their students is regularly monitored in order to ensure that the students' progress is maintained. IB physics was not inspected in the previous inspection so no judgement on improvement can be made.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very Good
Leadership	n/a
Management	n/a
Progress since the last inspection	n/a

Main strengths

- Students achieve very well due to very enthusiastic teaching and their excellent attitudes
- Teachers have a very good subject knowledge and work very hard to keep up to date with developments to enhance student learning
- Lessons are very well planned and comprise a variety of activities which keep all students productively occupied

Commentary

185. Students are now able to choose between the IB Information Technology in a Global Society (ITGS), and the IB computer science course which was introduced to the school in 2004. There are further plans to enrich the curriculum by making vocational courses available, opening up opportunities to more students. This report focuses on IB ITGS, although computer science was sampled.

Examination results

186. Results from the IB ICT standard course in 2004 were well above the average worldwide and all students gained at least four points. The course was not offered at higher level.

Standards and achievement

187. Students achieve very well. They have a clear understanding of ethical and social issues of ICT and employee monitoring and its implications. They understand IT systems in a social context including communication systems and areas of impact on business and employment. Students are able to produce good, well-argued essays, drawing on very good statistical evidence and using a high level of critical analysis. They are able to carry out very good independent research and use available resources intelligently, eliminating bias.

Teaching and learning

188. Students are taught by subject specialists, who have a very good knowledge of the subject. They respond quickly and accurately to students' questions. Teaching is at least very good and learning is very good in most lessons. Teachers make very good use of class discussions to enhance learning, drawing the most reticent students into lively discussions. Expectations are very high and there is a demand for significant student input. Lessons are planned very well and include a range of activities to make lessons enjoyable and keep students motivated to work very hard. There is an excellent range of resources available to support teaching and learning and this is very up to date. The best teaching delivery was charismatic, commanding engagement with the teacher who displayed a contagious enthusiasm for the subject.
189. Relationships between the teachers and students and within the groups are very good. The students show considerable respect for their teachers and recognise their qualities. Students are eager to learn; they like their teacher and therefore their subject. Group work is used effectively and there is a good match of abilities to ensure all students achieve very well.

190. Written work is very well marked and there were clear guidelines about what students need to do to improve their grades, as well as encouraging comments about achievement. Students have excellent attitudes to their work and they know they can turn to their teachers for additional help.

Leadership and management

191. The head of department had been in post for only two weeks at the time of the inspection so it is not possible to make a judgement on leadership and management. However, there is already a clear vision of how to develop this subject for an even wider appeal to more students.
192. There is no report for this course in the previous inspection so it is not possible to comment on improvement.

ICT across the curriculum

193. ICT is used by sixth form students in English, geography, modern foreign languages, biology and physical education for word processing coursework and essays. Students also use ICT in geography and biology fieldwork for analysis and manipulation of data. In mathematics, graphical calculators are utilized effectively and on-line software supports learning in further mathematics. Data logging is used in biology lessons to support practical investigations. PowerPoint presentations are used to deliver some topics in biology and physical education lessons with students given speaker's notes to annotate during the presentations. Interactive whiteboards are available in some classrooms and data projectors are available centrally. The use of these resources is developing. In business studies, students have found the availability of exemplar coursework material on a shared drive of the network a useful resource. ICT use in music is excellent. Students use ICT in every lesson for musical composition. Some use is made in design and technology of computer-aided design to develop coursework. This is another area which is also undergoing development.

HUMANITIES

The main subjects for inspection were geography at A-level, and history and theory of knowledge in the IB. The school also offers courses in classical civilisation, Latin, philosophy, government and politics, world politics, religious studies and general studies. In the Year 12 classical civilisation IB lesson sampled, very good teaching of Homer's 'The Odyssey' leads to students achieving very well and developing considerable knowledge of the character of Telemachus and Athene. Good teaching in a Year 12 government and politics AS class motivated students and by the end of the lesson they had increased their basic knowledge of the three party political system considerably. Students in a Year 12 lesson, who had just started an IB world politics course, achieved well and developed their understanding of the European nation state system. All students had chosen the course because of their interest in international relations and showed good levels of motivation. Students in the Year 13 A-level religious studies lesson sampled are very well taught and understand the philosophical and theological concepts they encounter. They read and absorb argument and speak and write well. Results at AS and A level are high, overall, showing good achievement. Very good questioning in the Year 13 A-level general studies course seen, enabled students to explore how the arts are affected by history. By the end of the lesson they were able to identify why modernism occurred, and how it changed art and influenced people's taste.

Geography

Provision in geography is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good

Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average
- Students succeed very well because of teaching that is very good
- Students' achievement is sometimes limited because they have insufficient opportunities for open-ended investigation
- Leadership has ensured that the subject is an improving and very successful one

Commentary

Examination results

194. A-Level results were well above average in 2003. The 2004 results were very similar. Students' grades were generally a little better in geography than in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

195. Although standards on entry are generally a little lower for the A-Level course than the IB, they are still above the national average. Standards attained by the current Year 13 students are well above average and they are achieving very well. This indicates that many have a realistic prospect of reaching very high standards by the end of the course. In investigating topics such as UK tourism, they all show considerable capability in undertaking research, identifying patterns and making and questioning hypotheses, such as the theory of a north-south divide.

Teaching and Learning

196. Teaching and learning are very good overall, and often excellent. In many lessons, the expertise and enthusiasm of teachers has a significant impact upon the quality of learning. Challenging tasks and questions, which provide depth, and stimulating explanations that motivate high interest from students, are important ingredients in their achievement. Learning is very well founded on good relationships, so that teachers and students collaborate very productively. This was seen, for example, in an excellent Year 12 lesson, in which the students had already developed the confidence to engage in discussions of a very high standard and to risk learning by sometimes not getting difficult tasks right the first time. In a discussion, students expressed very positive views about the teaching. However, they find that a few lessons limit their opportunities for independent learning. This was seen in a small number of lessons, in which, although good gains were made in learning, there were fewer opportunities for open-ended investigating than in most lessons, so that achievement did not reach the higher level of most lessons. In most lessons, the response of students, which is generally very good and often excellent, makes a very significant contribution to their achievement.

Leadership and management

197. Management is very well organised and leadership is characterised by a very strong vision for the role of the subject in contributing to the school's particular characteristic as an innovative learning institution. This is expressed, for example, in the excellent choice of courses that allows students to select the route that will be most helpful in meeting their own aspirations and needs. It has also been very effective in providing very good progress since the last inspection by improving further the examination results and achievement of students.

History

Provision in history is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	n/a

Main strengths

- A very popular and successful course leading to high standards for all students
- The curriculum is very well planned to balance autonomous learning with skills development
- Students achieve highly with strong support from teacher expertise and guidance

Commentary

Examination results

198. The most recent results are well above the worldwide average at both standard and higher level with all candidates gaining level five or above. Results are being monitored carefully to ensure that any suggestions made by examiners are immediately adapted for use by the department. For example, teachers are adapting the course to insist that students provide detail to support their analysis of issues.

Standards and achievement

199. Students achieve very well. All enter with minimum grade B at GCSE. Genuine high-attainers are quickly enabled to become autonomous learners by teacher expertise in developing the powers of analysis and research. Many students value history as a study in its own right and several intend to study history at university each year. A few students find the jump to independent study difficult and struggle to make up work midcourse when they realise the need for harder application.

Teaching and learning

200. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Strengths include curriculum planning and preparation and marking students' work, teacher expertise and enthusiasm for the broader approach and opportunities for development of analytical and critical skills. Resources are very good including the use of journals and the internet, and the advice that the expert staff provide. At times pace can suffer when all are interested in a wide ranging discussion, but are not clearly focused on achieving an understanding of a topic quickly enough to meet possible examination questions.

Leadership and management

201. Leadership and management are very good. The team works for improvement within the structure of the course and builds on the historical investigation and extended essay to develop very good study skills among all students. Links between history and the theory of knowledge component are very close and as a result students are very enthusiastic about the breadth and balance they can achieve in their extended essay. History continues to be a major component in the school's IB programme.

Theory of knowledge

Provision in the theory of knowledge is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Very high
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths

- Teaching is very good, resulting in very good learning
- Students' attitudes are very good and they are very positive about the course
- Students receive very good support and guidance

Commentary

Results

202. Overall, students on the IB Diploma courses gain very high results and theory of knowledge is at the core of this achievement because it provides very good opportunities for students to develop skills that equip them to achieve highly on the Diploma course and in future study.

Standards and achievement

203. Students benefit from a very well-structured course. Their essays show considerable improvement as they progress through Years 12 and 13 and very good achievement can be seen. Higher-attaining students in Year 13 write very well-organised essays with appropriate reference to the requirements of the question. Evaluations and conclusions in the essays of lower-attaining Year 12 students are not so clearly related to the question, having limited reference to the key words in the title, but the value of the course is seen in students' very good achievement in essay construction over time. Year 13 students are working well above the expected level. They have a good understanding of different theoretical perspectives and can apply these to a variety of topics. They appreciate the importance of basing findings on careful argument and analysis. The students can use their knowledge and understanding of underlying principles to explore different perspectives, for example in attitudes towards art where students challenged the impact of cultural and social differences on music in creating revolutionary changes in art-related thinking. Students discussed the influence of jazz and the blues on rock and the music of Jimi Hendrix and whether the work of Tracey Emin and Damien Hurst could be classified as good or bad art. Female students, new to the school, do as well as male students by Year 13.

Teaching and learning

204. Teaching is very good, overall. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and are fully acquainted with the Diploma requirements. They use a variety of strategies and stimulating materials. Very good teachers are skilful at questioning students, who learn very well as a result. For example, in a Year 12 lesson students worked on definitions for everyday objects; students in the early stages of the course pinpointed the essential characteristics of the object to home in on defining features and then on a definition of the object itself. They learned how to discuss, listen, summarise, assess, reject and finally define the merits of one another's suggestions to redraft definitions. This was assisted by the teacher drawing out everyone's

suggestions and questioning their validity. During this activity the students were able to identify their own problem-solving and suggest reasons why definition of abstract thought was more difficult than defining solid objects. This allowed them to explore an important area of study using reasoned argument and critical thinking skills. Students work very well in groups compiling supplementary information from work sheets and periodicals but research using the Internet is limited and hampered by a lack of access. Lower-attaining students are assisted by continued reinforcement of technical terms and the use of examples in lessons as well as well focused questioning by teachers. They are given very good feedback on essay preparation and completed work. Gifted and talented students are challenged by the very good knowledge and understanding of teachers which pushes discussion to a high level of understanding.

205. Students are very well aware of ongoing assessment of their oral contributions. They extend their thinking through questioning and discussion and this results in a stimulating exchange of ideas and increasingly confident dialogue. Students are encouraged to start taking risks when exploring new ideas. They value the relevance of the course to improving presentation in other subjects and see it as very good preparation for future study. Ongoing assessment is an essential part of the course to bring about improvement and marking provides students with very good feedback on completed assignments; this is consistently matched to Diploma grading.

Leadership and management

206. Leadership and management are very good. Staffing is good, with a wide variety of expertise from several different subject areas involved. Good, complementary research books are available in the library. The IB Diploma course had just been introduced at the time of the last inspection. Development of the integrated courses has been very good, overall, and the IB is very well established. Overall, results are very high and the school now guides and advises other schools new to the Diploma course. Large numbers in the sixth form are on the Diploma course and very good improvement has been made.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology is offered at both A-level and for the IB. The focus of the inspection was on AS and A-level provision, but a Year 12 lesson in the IB programme was sampled. It was a good introductory lesson at the start of the course. Standards of work in this lesson were satisfactory but showed good teaching and learning. The basic practical skills necessary for the course are being clearly developed.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning enable students to achieve well

- Well-organised and managed courses with close cooperation between teachers enable students to learn effectively
- Supportive marking and assessment procedures help students to realise their potential
- Working relationships foster good personal development and independent learning skills
- The presentation of coursework is good
- The use of computers is underdeveloped

Commentary

Examination results

207. In 2003, examination results were average and few students gained the highest grades. The 2004 results are similar.
208. Attainment for the students who took at AS level in 2003 was high, and results have improved over three years. At A-level all eight students gained A to E grades, but only one gained an A grade.

Standards and achievement

209. Students achieve well in relation to their varying starting points and current standards show some improvement and are above average. All students make good advances in knowledge, understanding and skills as they progress through the course. They analyse existing products, carry out research and are able to develop and evaluate ideas and final solutions. Students follow a series of well-chosen tasks, which develop their knowledge and skills in using materials and become increasingly proficient in the role of designer. Students learn experimental techniques when learning about materials and their use. The quality of presentation of work in design folders is good. Students use a variety of presentation skills, including the use of computer-generated work to illustrate their thinking. However, the use of computer-generated work is still an area for development. Students have positive attitudes to their work and spend considerable time and effort in producing their portfolios of work. Working relationships are good and students develop their study skills well throughout the course and as a result personal development is good.

Teaching and learning

210. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Effective shared teaching of groups makes good use of teachers' expertise and courses are delivered effectively. Teachers have good knowledge of the examination requirements and plan well-structured courses. They generally plan their lessons well but in some cases, expectations of students are not sufficiently high and time could be used more productively. Regular monitoring and assessment of work, linked to individual feedback to students in lessons, is very effective in reinforcing learning and is enabling students to improve their work. However, clear targets to extend students' expertise and enable them to gain the highest grades are not always set.

Leadership and management

211. Leadership and management are both good. Staff work cooperatively and use their individual areas of expertise well. Courses provide structured and well-organised experiences for students. Limited resources are used well but place constraints on teaching and learning.
212. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good. The subject continues to develop in spite of the limitations of resources and accommodation. Students are able to develop their designing and making skills to a good standard and all achieve well by the end of the course.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The school offers courses in art and music at Alevel and IB, theatre arts in the IB, and performing arts at AVCE. The focus of the inspection was on music for the IB. In the lessons sampled, standards in the Year 13 art lesson were broadly average. Students studying the IB made good contributions to the group discussions drawing on their wider reading to present a historical and cultural perspective to the chosen themes. The skilful questioning by the teacher deepened students' understanding. In recent years the numbers taking visual arts have been relatively small and standards have been broadly average for A-level and IB courses. Inspirational teaching made the Year 13 theatre arts lesson a high quality experience for students. They contributed their wider understanding of social, historical and political contexts to Brechtian drama. The pace of this lesson was stunning and activities flowed seamlessly as groups built and then retold a performance piece from different points of view. In the Year 13 AVCE performing arts lesson observed, very good teaching enabled students to evaluate and improve the footwork moves required to produce effective and safe sword fighting sequences.

Music

Provision in music is excellent.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Very high
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Outstanding
Management	Outstanding
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths

- Very good teaching results in very high attainment amongst committed students
- The course is well planned to focus on the needs of the examination
- Students have outstanding opportunities to develop their skills as performers and musicians

Commentary

Examination results

213. Small numbers of students entering the examination, and the lack of significant national data makes it difficult to interpret recent results.

Standards and achievement

214. Current standards are very high and students achieve very well. Students are articulate and knowledgeable. Their command of specialised musical terminology is impressive. Many students perform to a very high level and their composition work shows imagination, musical understanding, and craftsmanship.

Teaching and learning

215. Teaching is very good. Imaginative activities encourage students to become fully engaged in their learning. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent. Work is thoroughly marked and excellent guidance is given to students as to how to improve. Excellent use is made of ICT to help students to compose to a high level.

Leadership and management

216. The leadership and management of the course are outstanding. The requirements of the examination are thoroughly embedded in the way that the course is planned and taught. Students value the provision very highly indeed. They are given excellent opportunities to utilise the department's facilities to practise and compose outside of lesson time. Their performing skills are nurtured through a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The opportunity to rehearse and perform together in chamber ensembles supports the development of musicianship to a very high level. Students play a full part in the musical life of the school and are given excellent opportunities to lead and direct groups. Improvement since the time of the previous inspection has been very good. The course is developing a high reputation within and beyond the school, and significant numbers of students are now attracted to it.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

Provision in physical education is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths

- The subject is very well led so students are very well supported and guided
- The course is well structured and teaching is very good so students learn very quickly
- Students' attitudes are very good and this assists very good learning and achievement
- Extra-curricular activities give excellent opportunities for students to extend their experience and learning

Commentary

Examination results

217. The first cohort of A-level students completed the course in 2004. School data suggests that A-level students achieved better than expected results when previous performance was taken into consideration.

Standards and achievement

218. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are well above average. Students achieve very well when results at GCSE are taken into account. Early in Year 12, students can identify definitions and technical terms. Specialist vocabulary is used in all lessons. For example, students early in Year 12 are able to identify joints and muscles and relate these very well to individual sporting actions. This helps all students with their video analysis of personal performances so that they are able to coach each other in learning and improvement of skills and techniques. By Year 13, students are confident in problem solving employing these strategies to improve performance and are aware of the psychology which may affect individual performance. Well-informed discussions in Year 13 show that students retain their learning very well. They are competent at organising essays and understand how to plan and research. Students answer questions very well and choose appropriate examples to support their answers, often from their own selected sports areas. Students understand how to construct and analyse graphs, collect data and relate theory and practical work. Homework is set regularly and areas for improvement are usually identified. The standard achieved by talented team players is very high; they perform at local, regional and national level in a variety of sports and are encouraged to join clubs.

Teaching and learning

219. In lessons, a rapid pace ensures that much is achieved in the time. A very good personal understanding of the subject enables teachers to challenge students rigorously; this inspires students' interest. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, students' understanding of the skills and the quality of movement was developed excellently as the teacher used a variety of teaching methods to encourage a deep understanding of anatomy and physiology. This resulted in excellent interchange of ideas and confident discussion. In other lessons, expectations of students' participation were lower. Teaching usually extends students' thinking very well through very good demanding questioning and discussion. Students are focused very well on

improvement. Greater support for their very good learning through supplementing the teaching with their own Internet and document-based research is developing. Students enjoy learning to understand the impact of different topic areas on the whole subject and are aware of recent developments and topical issues.

Leadership and management

220. The department is committed to improving the achievements of its students. Focus on analysis drives improvement in examination technique. All teachers are well acquainted with the needs of examinations and regularly attend courses to help to keep the department and students up-to-date. Teachers have analysed the course contents of different examination boards. Anatomy and physiology are taught early in the course so that students establish an early grip on this topic to apply learning within personal fitness programmes as well as to other aspects of the course. Good systems of monitoring students' progress, using prior grades, enable teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses. This guides teaching and enables teachers to advise students very well.
221. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. The A-level has been reintroduced. Female students are very well integrated into the course and their needs are met. The popularity and success of the physical education course, and consequently increasing numbers, is well assisted by a specific theory room.

Business

A-level business studies was the focus for the inspection but lessons in IB and AVCE courses were also sampled. The standard seen in the Year 12 IB lessons was well above average. The teacher's very good subject knowledge and very good relationships provided a learning climate where students achieved highly. 'Break-even' methods of accounting were clearly explained and students completed the tasks quickly and accurately. In the AVCE lesson, very good teaching enabled Year 12 students to produce high quality examination coursework. Extensive assessment of work raises standards to a high level.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	High
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results have been well above average
- Students achieve high standards because of very effective teaching
- Teachers' very good assessment and guidance leads to students being well informed about how they are doing
- Students have very positive attitudes towards their studies
- Access to ICT facilities is not always easy and limits students' opportunities for research

Commentary

Examination results

222. Results in A-level, AVCE and AS examinations have been well above the national average. The most recent results are similar.

Standards and achievement

223. Standards of the work seen were high. Students are knowledgeable and achieve highly. They easily use formulae to calculate the profitability of businesses. They understand how to write good job descriptions and very good extended essays, an example being a very detailed marketing plan for a local car accessory firm.

Teaching and Learning

224. Teaching is very good, overall. This is due to the detailed subject knowledge of the teachers and the strong work ethic that students bring to lessons. Learning is supported by patient, careful explanations. A lesson on how businesses work out their profitability had clear explanations and use of examples. Lessons are enlivened by the very good relationships which encourage students to seek assistance whenever necessary and to feel comfortable in using class discussion as a way to develop their own and the class's understanding. Students are given 'real life' opportunities to learn about business by running their own companies, advising the school's 'Mick Jagger' centre on how to improve its image and by using visits to Strasbourg and Slovakia to compare UK businesses with those in mainland Europe.

Leadership and management

225. The subject is led and managed very well. Courses are well planned and teachers teach to their strengths. As a consequence, students benefit from their specialist knowledge. The teachers' examination experience enables them to guide students towards very high levels of exam achievement. Good learning resources are available to students on computers but access to ICT facilities is not always easy and limits students' opportunities for research. Since the last inspection both standards and the quality of teaching have risen to well above average and improvement has been very good.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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