

INSPECTION REPORT

THE FRANCES BARDSLEY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Romford

LEA area: Havering

Unique reference number: 102351

Headteacher: Mrs Suzanne Philipps

Lead inspector: Graham Preston

Dates of inspection: 7 - 10 March 2005

Inspection number: 268961

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

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll:	1228
School address:	Brentwood Road Romford Essex
Postcode:	RM 12RR
Telephone number:	01708 447368
Fax number:	01708 442729
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Hewitt
Date of previous inspection:	26.04.1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Frances Bardsley School for Girls is a larger than average 11-18 single sex comprehensive school with 1228 pupils. This includes a sixth form of 146 students that has increased in size though is smaller than average. The school has recently been able to amalgamate on one site with the closure of the lower school and major building on what was the upper school site.

It is oversubscribed and as a non-denominational school for girls, it draws from the whole of Havering as well as Essex and adjoining London boroughs. Cognitive ability tests indicate that it has an average intake though, in common with other local schools, its pupils enter with better than average attainment in English, mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, is well below the national average.

Although the school is located in a predominantly owner occupier district near Romford town centre, its intake reflects the full range of socio-economic backgrounds. Just over seven per cent of pupils claim free school meals which is below the national average. The majority of pupils have white UK backgrounds though there has been a steady increase in girls from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds including African-Caribbean and those from the Indian subcontinent. About nine per cent of pupils are considered to have a first language other than English, which is higher than that nationally, though in practice almost all are fully bilingual. Only one pupil is considered to be at a very early stage of English language acquisition. A high proportion of students continue into further education where there is a wide choice locally. About a third continue into the sixth form. Three-quarters of these go on to university or other higher education institutions.

The school has built on its main strengths in recent years, reflected in the awards of Sportsmark and Artsmark. Most recently it was successful in its bid to become a specialist Visual Arts College and is actively developing its arts related curriculum as well as developing stronger links with local schools. It is also working closely with a local university in the provision of initial teacher training and has 'Investors in People' status.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1990	Graham Preston	Lead inspector	
31758	Edward Tipper	Lay inspector	
13734	Harold Davies	Team inspector	Geography 11-16 and sixth form
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	History sixth form
20877	David Pink	Team inspector	Religious education 11-16 Citizenship 11-16
13067	Alan Quinn	Team inspector	Science 11-16 Chemistry sixth form
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Design and technology 11-16
35064	Sally Panter	Team inspector	French 11-16 German 11-16
22849	Ronald Catlow	Team inspector	History 11-16
20527	Brian King	Team inspector	Mathematics 11-16 and sixth form
8090	Frank Turns	Team inspector	Art and design 11-16 and sixth form
33294	Christine Murrell	Team inspector	Physical education 11-16
28106	Michelle Majid	Team inspector	Information and communication technology 11-16
32807	Jamie Clarke	Team inspector	Music 11-16
35082	Andrew Carter	Team inspector	English 11-16 and sixth form
3258	David Bain	Team inspector	Psychology sixth form
10807	Paul Quest	Team inspector	Health and social care sixth form Sociology sixth form

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates

Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	16
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	25
WORK RELATED LEARNING	28
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	30
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	66

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Frances Bardsley School is a good school with very good features. Good leadership and management have enabled the school to maintain its well above average standards during recent restructuring and building work. Good teaching and learning ensure students achieve well and the school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The senior leadership team and governors who have successfully established the school on a single site. The very good vision of the headteacher, well supported by key staff, has helped the school grasp the opportunity to build on its considerable strengths.
- Good specialist teaching and high teacher expectations have enabled pupils to achieve well in all subject areas.
- Outstanding provision in modern foreign languages, physical education and art has contributed to high standards and, in the case of art, has led to the school successfully becoming a specialist Visual Arts College.
- The very strong school ethos, reflected in very good pupil attitudes, creates a particularly effective learning environment.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory and are hindering its further progress.
- Academic monitoring and target setting are only in the early stages of development and marking and assessment practice are underdeveloped. Consequently, pupils are not fully aware of their progress.
- The implementation of a wider range of teaching and learning methods varies across and within different subject areas and in some lessons there are insufficient opportunities for students to be more active and independent learners.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Most statutory requirements are now met and there have been significant improvements in ICT. Most importantly, standards have considerably improved for all students in almost all subject areas, including modern foreign languages, which is now a major strength of the school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils achieve well in all years and by Year 9, reach above average standards. Pupil progress continues to be good in Years 10-11 and GCSE standards are well above the national average. Sixth form students achieve appropriately, overall.

The ability tests pupils take on entry indicate that the school intake is in line with the average comprehensive school though many of the girls have done well in primary school and arrive with above average results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. They have mostly average knowledge and skills in the other subjects. They make good progress and achieve well in most of their subjects. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above the national average in English and science and well above in mathematics. This good progress continues in Years 10-11 and in the last two years, school GCSE results have been the best ever. Standards in most subjects are well above national average and reflect good student achievement. Sixth form standards are above national average for those students who gain one or more GCE A-Levels reflecting good achievement. Achievement by all sixth form students is satisfactory.

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	A	A	B
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	B	B	B	

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.

For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work and want to do well. They have very good relationships with the teachers and behave well throughout the school. Attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory in the main school, reflecting an improvement in procedures. Sixth form students, although very positive, are too casual in their approach to attendance and punctuality, both of which are unsatisfactory. Pupils' social development is very good, moral and cultural development are good and spiritual development is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. The good curriculum covers statutory requirements and the successful bid to be a specialist Visual Arts College is providing opportunities for more arts related courses in Years 10-11. Vocational courses in other areas are less well developed though work experience provides valuable enhancement. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities that include sports, music and drama. The care system is supportive though limited tutor time is slowing the development of academic monitoring of pupils. Links with parents and the community are good. There are satisfactory and improving links with schools, colleges and universities reflecting development as a new specialist college and as a valued contributor to teacher training.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. In almost all subjects the teaching is good. Nearly a third of teaching is very good or excellent. Teaching is strongest in Years 10-11 and the sixth form where teachers prepare students well for external examinations. The school is working hard to establish its management arrangements on the new single site and these include more consistent approaches to marking and assessment.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management are good. Governance is good.

The headteacher is greatly valued by colleagues for her very good and clear vision for the school. She is particularly effective in promoting the very strong and positive school ethos. The hard working and committed senior leadership team work well together and, with the support of all staff, has successfully managed the major school reorganisation and building on the new single site. Management systems have undergone considerable change with the new arrangements and, though still developing, are generally effective. Governance of the school is good though the school has not met the requirement for collective worship. There is a core of dedicated and very well informed governors who are actively involved in the development of the school.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have high expectations of the school. They recognise its considerable strengths and appreciate good school information but have some justifiable concerns about the detail of their children's progress. Pupils are very positive and feel they are taught well by teachers who have high expectations of them. They value the opportunities provided by the school council but have concerns about how seriously the school takes their views.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that the whole school systems of assessing students on entry to the school, tracking their progress and establishing targets for improvement, are fully developed and firmly embedded in all subject areas.
- Improve the quality and consistency of marking and assessment practice in all subject areas in ways that inform students of their progress against national standards and give clear guidance for improvement.
- Ensure the good and often very good teaching and learning in the sixth form are well supported by effective leadership and management.
- Enable pupils and students to be active and independent learners by providing a greater range of teaching and learning opportunities in some subject areas.

And to meet statutory requirements,

- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Frances Bardsley has a **satisfactory sixth form**. Its strengths are in teaching, with good or better teaching in four out of five lessons seen. Approximately a third of students from Year 11 progress into the sixth form, and they are joined by a small number of external students. Support for entrance to higher education is good, and in 2004, three quarters of students left to continue their education at university. There are aspects of leadership and management that are unsatisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The students are positive about their experiences in the sixth form, which is reflected in the very good relationships they have with their teachers.
- The good quality of teaching, which is based on high expectations, a good command of areas of learning and effective planning.
- Teachers are committed; know their students well and work hard to support their social and academic development.
- The management of systems is inadequate, which results in unsatisfactory levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Leadership of the team of tutors does not reflect the school's aims and policies.
- The school offers a very wide choice of academic subjects but does not cater well for the needs of those students who would be better suited taking vocational courses.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	English language and English literature: Good. Teaching and learning in the subjects are good. Teachers have sound subject knowledge, which they are able to convey effectively. As a result, standards attained are above the national average. Students have positive attitudes, as reflected in full portfolios, which show sustained effort and hard work, and their achievement is good.
Mathematics	Good. Courses in both A-level mathematics and further mathematics are available and taught by specialist teachers. Both teaching and learning are good and ensure achievement is good and standards reflect then the national average.
Science	Chemistry: Satisfactory. Standards at AS and A-level are below the national average. Achievement over time is satisfactory and progress was good in the lessons observed. Teaching is good.
Humanities	History: Very good. Very well organised teachers develop high levels of interest and skills in students. Learning is very secure and students are achieving well. Geography: Good. Good, accurate teaching combined with positive attitudes on the part of students results in good achievement in relation to GCSE and AS-level performance. Sociology: Good. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject to ensure that students learn well and achieve grades that are above the national average.

Psychology: Satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory but uses a narrow range of strategies with little emphasis on students working collaboratively, consequently, despite students' very positive attitudes, achievement is only satisfactory and results are below average.

**Curriculum
area**

Evaluation

**Visual and
performing
arts and media**

Art and design: Very good. Teaching and learning are very good and standards are above the national average. The quality of relationships and support are excellent.

**Health and
social care**

Satisfactory: The GNVQ Intermediate course provides a secure learning environment, which enables lower attaining students to achieve well. Lessons in the AVCE course lack challenge and pace and as a result students do not develop the independent learning skills needed to achieve the standard of which they are capable.

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 mostly receive good support and guidance from their teachers, who know them very well. The school has good procedures to introduce students, including those joining from other institutions, to the requirements and expectations of the sixth form. Students' progress is monitored to a satisfactory level. Selected students benefit from the guidance of learning mentors, which enables them to improve their performance. The provision for careers education is satisfactory. Students receive good support with their higher education applications.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

There are inadequacies in the leadership and management of the sixth form. The head of sixth form and his deputy have positive aspirations for the students; however these are not reflected in some aspects of the day-to-day management of the sixth form area, and in particular, the monitoring of attendance and punctuality. Policies that reflect the schools' high standards are not applied systematically across the work of the sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are positive about the sixth form. They enjoy being members of the sixth form community and are particularly appreciative of the quality of teaching, and the guidance and support they receive from their subject teachers. The concerns they expressed about the rather limited range of regular extra-curricular activities are justified, and the school has taken note of this.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils achieve well in all years and by Year 9, reach above average standards. Pupil progress continues to be good in Years 10-11 and GCSE standards are well above the national average. Sixth form students achieve appropriately, overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall pupil achievement is good in all subjects in the main school reflecting generally good teaching and subject management.
- In modern foreign languages, physical education and art and design, pupil progress and achievement are very good, reflecting the high quality of provision in those subjects.
- The overall school atmosphere, although changed with the large single site, encourages pupils to work hard and do their best.
- Pupil progress in science in Years 7-9 has been slower than the school average because of accommodation problems in the last year, but has since improved.
- Sixth form students achieve appropriately, though their results are lower than they might be because of issues of attendance and the type and number of courses selected.
- Although special educational needs pupils achieve well overall, the banding arrangements limit their social integration and academic progress.

Commentary

1. The ability tests pupils take on entry to the school indicate that the school intake is in line with the average comprehensive school nationally. Many of the girls have done well in primary school and arrive with above average results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. They have mostly average knowledge and skills in the other subjects.
2. In the end of Year 9 tests in 2004, pupils reached standards above the national average in the three core subjects overall and well above average scores in English and mathematics. In English and mathematics particularly, pupils on average, achieve better than those in similar schools in terms of their prior attainment in primary schools. This is reflected in generally good progress and achievement by pupils, particularly in the context of the disruption caused by building work. This work affected science most in terms of access to practical facilities and helps explain the fall in average points score in the table below. Standards seen in the inspection broadly reflect the recent test and examination results.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	37.1 (35.2)	N/A (33.4)
mathematics	38.0 (37.1)	N/A (35.4)
science	34.3 (35.3)	N/A (33.6)

There were 219 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. In English by Year 9, most pupils are able to write confidently in a variety of styles, producing fluent narrative and explanatory or persuasive pieces, as well as experimenting in a range of verse forms. They are also able to respond intelligently to literature and media texts, analysing character and form. The above average standards and good pupil achievement are

the result of effective specialist teaching and good preparation for the end of Year 9 SAT English test.

4. Girls' progress in mathematics is greatest in Years 7-9 where many achieve very well and this provides a strong platform for later years. Higher-attaining pupils in all years show very good mathematical skills, supported by careful presentation, clear indication of method, and high quality written work. More pupils are now studying for higher tier GCSE mathematics because of that earlier success.
5. Current progress in science is not quite as impressive as mathematics because the teaching and learning are not as effective and challenging, though like English, the good preparation for the end of Year 9 test ensures that pupils achieve well in terms of reaching above and often well above average standards.
6. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above the national average by the end of Year 9 reflecting good pupil achievement as a result of effective and varied teaching. Pupils demonstrate skills in a range of different applications as well as Internet use. This is mostly within the core programme, though pupils do use computers in other areas within the current resource constraints.
7. Achievement in other Years 7-9 subjects is mostly good; very much so in modern foreign languages, art and design and physical education.
8. The very good achievement in French and German, reflects very good and excellent teaching. Modern foreign languages pupils are banded in Year 7 and are then able to progress according to their ability. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in smaller French classes created for them. Pupils in other bands follow different schemes of work appropriate for their ability and progress is regularly monitored.
9. Similarly the very good practice in art enables pupils of all abilities to develop a good grounding in the basic elements of art. They are particularly confident using paint and colour and standards of drawing are good. Research into the work of other artists is very thorough and pupils effectively incorporate new techniques into their own work.
10. In physical education, the girls do particularly well because of the specialist coaching that engages their interest and encourages them to become involved in extra-curricular activities that extend the skills learned in school.
11. There are no instances of unsatisfactory pupil achievement in Years 7-9. Progress in music is satisfactory rather than good because lesson planning and assessment activities are not as effective as they could be in contrast to the much better teaching and learning in GCSE music.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	73 (70)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (98)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	41.6 (41.6)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 215 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

12. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 10-11 and achieve well in their GCSE subjects. Standards in all three core subjects are well above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C and their GCSE average point score, both shown above, represent the best school performance ever and better than the school's set targets.
13. Achievement is good in almost all subjects and again, very good in physical education, art and design and modern foreign languages. Pupil progress is satisfactory rather than good in religious education in the comparatively rare instance in the school where teaching involves some non-specialists.
14. In English, pupils make good progress on the back of their often well established literacy skills. What stops achievement being even better are some relative weaknesses in teaching and learning and assessment though pupils are well prepared for GCSE examinations. A similar point about teaching and assessment can be made about mathematics though again, the good achievement at GCSE is based on good foundation work in Years 7-9. Science is a little different because the pupils benefit from more specialist teaching in each of the three sciences and the pupils' rate of progress actually speeds up towards the GCSE examination and other assessments.
15. Standards and achievement in ICT in Years 10-11 are more mixed because for one year only, the school has relied on cross-curricular delivery of the programme of study. Those taking the applied ICT course, run jointly by the school and a local college, are achieving well. Those Year 11 pupils taking the GCSE are now progressing well but lost ground in Year 10 because of the lack of access to computers during the building work. Other pupils are making satisfactory progress through the identified ICT opportunities within other subjects, though access to resources is still a problem.
16. In many ways, pupils' GCSE standards and achievement in modern foreign languages are the most impressive. Almost all pupils take one language and many take two. Standards seen were well above the national average and similar to the 2004 results for French and German. Pupils demonstrate listening and reading skills of a high standard. They have very good grammatical knowledge and very well developed speaking and listening skills. Unlike many schools where only the higher attaining and/or well motivated take GCSE languages, pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented and all in between take GCSE and achieve very well. Many achieve excellently.
17. Special educational needs pupils make good progress during their time in school and reach standards in line with the national average by Year 11. Achievement of pupils with special educational needs is at least satisfactory in all subjects and very good in English, physical education, communications and ICT where very good account is taken of individual targets and learning activities are well matched to pupils' needs. All pupils on the register recognised as needing specific school action have detailed 'Individual Education Plans'. Nine pupils with a statement of need have a teaching assistant for in class support for some hours each week. Non-statemented pupils rely on the special arrangements of classroom teachers. Special educational needs pupils are largely taught together and though that has some advantages, there are too few opportunities for them to have models of good practice to aspire to. Opportunities are very limited for them to progress into higher groups for different subjects where they show particular skill and this clearly restricts the progress of some.
18. Overall, the progress made by the EAL pupil is good and is similar to that of her peers for whom English is a first language.

Sixth form

19. Students enter the sixth form with average GCSE point scores and in terms of value added, most students achieve broadly in line with the A-level grades predicted. The table below shows that standards were a little lower in 2004 compared with the previous year and in terms

of grades per entry, they were below the national average, particularly for the higher grades. This to some extent reflects the unsatisfactory attendance of some students and the difficulty of coping with a larger than average number of GCE A and AS levels, particularly when students have lower than average GCSE grades on entry. However, because the school does encourage students to take more courses, students' overall aggregate points scores are above the national average. Results at AS-level per entry were below the national average in 2003 and in 2004. The school results at AS and A-level are above the LEA average.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	90.1 (93.9)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	23.7 (25.6)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per student	280.2 (303.8)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 44 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

20. Overall, students respond well to teaching, and in the lessons observed and in the samples of work scrutinised, overall achievement was at least satisfactory. In the majority of lessons observed, the standards reached by students were in line with national averages.
21. There are eight students with special educational needs in the sixth form. Overall, these students make similar progress to their peers. There are no students at an early stage of English language acquisition.
22. Students' standards in literacy and communication skills are above national expectations. Standards in numeracy and ICT are also above national expectations. Students make effective use of the Internet through which they develop their skills in research and independent working.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour is good in the main school and the sixth form. Their attitudes to their work and towards others in the school are very good throughout the school. Attendance is good in the main school and unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Punctuality is satisfactory in the main school and unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils and sixth form students are very enthusiastic in their approach to lessons and other activities.
- The school sets high expectations of pupils' behaviour which are generally met in lessons as well as in assemblies and lunch breaks. A small number of pupils behave less well.
- The school is making good progress in raising the level of attendance which is now better than the national average in the main school. Getting to school and lessons on time is less impressive.
- Inadequate arrangements in the sixth form result in unsatisfactory levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Pupils' social development is very good and cultural and moral development are good, reflecting positive features of the overall school ethos.

Commentary

23. Most pupils are eager to come to school and participate in its many activities. Their positive attitudes to lessons are evident even when the teaching is not of the usual good standard and they are keen to join in the many extra-curricular activities. An after-school football club, for example, was well attended by an enthusiastic group of pupils despite the poor weather.

Pupils also take on responsibility willingly. They have a range of opportunities to do so, such as acting as school councillors, form captains and vice captains, prefects as well as organising charity collections. They work and play well with each other in a generally relaxed environment and relate well to adults in the school. For the most part, visitors are treated with politeness and courtesy and engaged willingly in conversation. Most pupils are confident individuals who demonstrate a high level of self-esteem.

24. The school has a clear system for controlling behaviour understood by pupils and appreciated by parents. Behaviour in lessons is almost always good, and often very good, although there are some pupils who can find it difficult to contain their emotions in some situations. At breaktime, pupils generally congregate in small groups that coexist amicably. At lunchtime, they are particularly well behaved given the limited nature of the accommodation for them to eat their lunch. In assemblies, behaviour is exemplary. Around the school they can get boisterous, a situation partly influenced by the narrowness of the corridors. While bullying exists, it is treated openly by the school and most pupils and parents feel confident that, once brought to the school's attention, it is dealt with promptly and effectively.
25. Pupils with special educational needs are keen to come to school. They are interested in lessons and want to do well. They take a pride in their work and are willing to show their efforts to visitors in the classroom.
26. As they are taught in specific special needs classes, there are fewer opportunities for social mixing. In general, relationships between all pupils are very good.
27. The overall provision for pupils' personal development is good and very good for social development. The provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. Regular assemblies are held which provide the pupils with a quiet start to the day. Often these include thoughtful activities upon which pupils can reflect. Pupils are asked to consider the achievements of women from history, other times pupils from the Christian Union present a mime about seeking help from God. In art, pupils engage with the local church in order to provide suitable decorations. Pupils are given very effective opportunities within religious education to reflect upon ideas beyond themselves. However opportunities to develop pupils' sense of the spiritual are missed in some assemblies and in science teaching.
28. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. In physical education pupils are made well aware of the rules and attitudes required for team working. In religious education pupils in Year 11 begin to understand how the Christian route to heaven can differ depending on the reading of different parts of the Bible. Pupils also have ample opportunities to study the beliefs of people who follow other main world religions.
29. The provision for developing pupils' ethical sense is good. The development of responsibilities for living in a community is very good. Especially through religious education, art and physical education, pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong in their dealing with others. They are encouraged to be confident in their dealings with others. Pupils regularly run effective events which raise money for charity. They also take part in citizenship activities organised locally.
30. The provision for cultural development is good. Effective links are made with local arts and religious organisations. This development comes largely through art and religious education and is reflected in the schools status as a specialist arts college. The choir regularly performs for audiences both in and out of school.

Attendance

The attendance officer implements the system for recording and monitoring pupils' attendance very well. The two key stage leaders receive weekly reports of figures for the year groups broken down by tutor group. Parents of pupils on a list of regular poor attendees are telephoned on the first day

of absence, as are others on a random basis. The key stage leaders target those pupils with less than 85 per cent attendance, working closely with the heads of year and form tutors and, in extreme cases, the education welfare officer. Pupils are encouraged to attend through a range of incentives such as the weekly presentation of shields for the best forms and end-of-year trips. As a result of these initiatives, attendance is now above the national average and the school is planning additional measures to improve it further. Many pupils arrive late at the beginning of the school day. Although most of these arrive on public service transport and travel for some distance, they leave little margin for error should there be any delays. Punctuality to lessons is also an issue especially where pupils have to go from one end of the site to the other in what is now a large school.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.0	School data	0.5
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

The number of pupils excluded is high when compared with similar schools. While this is a consequence of an increasing number of challenging pupils, it also reflects the school's unwillingness to accept poor behaviour. However, given the increased need to provide for pupils with behavioural and other concerns, there is a lack of suitable in-school provision in the form of an internal withdrawal and support facility, now common in most schools. Parents' unwillingness to state their ethnic background - nearly half do not - makes it difficult for the school to carry out any meaningful analysis of exclusions in terms of pupils' backgrounds.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	517	31	2
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	4	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	19	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	10	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	6	3	0

Black or Black British – African	10	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	11	1	0
Chinese	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	594	46	2

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

Sixth form

31. Students' attitudes to the school are positive. They identify closely with the school and speak highly of the support they receive from their teachers in the sixth form.
32. Teachers recognise the need to inculcate a strong work ethic and to monitor the progress of each girl closely. Students are encouraged to work conscientiously and to assume responsibility for their own learning. The recent reorganisation of the existing sixth form accommodation has provided a substantial area for quiet study, so that students can work productively during school hours.
33. There are inadequate procedures in place for monitoring their attendance and punctuality. Sixth form leaders ensure that students sign a contract on entry to the sixth form, but thereafter insufficient emphasis is placed on the importance of good daily attendance and punctuality. During the inspection, girls arriving late to tutorials and assembly were not challenged, and the arrangements for signing in at the main school when arriving after registration were often overlooked by individual students. As a consequence overall attendance figures are low. Poor attendance on the part of a significant minority impacts adversely on overall standards of achievement and attainment.
34. The school is endeavouring to build links with institutions of higher education, and led by the gifted and talented co-ordinator, the most able students are being encouraged to attend master classes and summer schools, including those at Villiers Park. The international dimension of sixth form life is less well developed. There is also scope to build stronger partnerships with local business enterprises.
35. The personal development of students is good. Students may choose to assume responsibilities and to contribute to activities in the school at large. Every year elections are held for the posts of head girl and senior prefect. Some opportunities exist for students to voice an opinion and to initiate ideas through the school council.
36. In general, students relate well to one another and work co-operatively. There is a convivial aspect to the sixth form and students say that they enjoy sixth form life. A number of social events are arranged during the year, including a sixth form Christmas pantomime that is scripted and performed for the rest of the school by sixth formers.
37. Provision for moral, spiritual, social and cultural development through different subject areas, assemblies, conferences, citizenship and general studies courses is good.
38. Each year, sixth formers participate in a range of educational visits including a Year 12 trip to the Houses of Parliament. In September 2004, students of art and history travelled to Budapest. Sixth formers contribute to sports teams, drama productions, concerts and other school events. They are also involved in raising money for charity. Individual sixth form students have recently represented Essex in cross country running and synchronised swimming, and the UK in fencing, karate, sports acrobatics and team gymnastics.
39. Overall, the school prepares students effectively for entry to tertiary education. In 2004, 75 per cent of students gained a university place.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. The good curriculum covers statutory requirements and the successful bid to be a specialist Visual Arts College is providing opportunities for more arts related courses in Years 10-11. Vocational courses in other areas are less well developed. Work experience provides valuable enhancement. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities that include sports, music and drama. The care system is supportive. Limited tutor time is slowing the development of academic monitoring of pupils. Links with parents and the community are good. There are satisfactory and improving links with schools, colleges and universities, reflecting development as a new specialist college and as a valued contributor to teacher training.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are consistently good reflecting the specialist knowledge and experience of the staff though there is scope for using more lesson activities that actively involve pupils and sixth form students in their learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well informed teaching from enthusiastic specialist teachers is a major reason for most pupils achieving well.
- The very best teaching has high expectations and has embraced more recent developments for better planned and more varied practice that improves learning.
- Teachers foster very good working relationships with pupils and sixth form students that benefit learning.
- Pupils are well prepared for tests and examinations in most subjects.
- Some lessons consist of long periods of teachers talking so limiting opportunities for pupils and sixth form students to be more actively involved in their learning.
- While there is good assessment in some areas, many subjects are still developing marking and assessment practice that helps pupils know their current standard and how they can improve.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 168 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (2%)	42 (25%)	75 (45%)	45 (27%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	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.

40. The overall standard of teaching and learning in the main school is good with over two thirds of lessons observed being judged good or better. Over a quarter of teaching and learning was judged to be very good with some excellent practice, notably in modern foreign languages, physical education and art and design.
41. The school has the benefit of experienced specialists in almost all subjects across the school. These teach with energy, enthusiasm and authority that come from very good subject knowledge and developed expertise conveying that knowledge. This was evident in GCSE science lessons where challenging teaching pushed pupils to work logically from first principles towards greater conceptual understanding. In ICT, the specialist teachers were able to anticipate pupils' likely areas of misunderstanding through skilful questioning. In contrast, in religious education a lack of specialist teaching slowed pupils' progress in some lessons.
42. A feature of most teaching is the emphasis teachers place on developing positive and effective working relationships with pupils and sixth form students. This is helped greatly by the extent to which the girls come to lessons eager to work hard and succeed. In a number of lessons seen, these positive relationships enabled effective learning to take place even when the teacher's presentation and lesson organisation were not particularly good. However, increasingly, teachers do use the girls' co-operation and readiness to be involved to make greater use of role-play, group work and other activities.
43. The best teaching embraced many of the good features associated with the national initiative to improve teaching and learning in schools. Much of this is evident in modern foreign languages teaching in the school. Lessons are very well planned, use target language expertly with fast paced, active pair and group work. Learning is structured into small steps using focused questioning to confirm pupils' understanding at each stage and build their

confidence. Excellent physical education teaching also contains similar positive features that include much active learning through group work in which pupils evaluate and support each other in different activities such as trampolining and dance. Excellent practice in art and design also illustrates the value of clear learning outcomes to lessons and a variety of activities to sustain interest and pace.

44. Other subjects too, contain many of these good features including well structured history and geography lessons with good use of starter activities to engage pupil interest quickly. Increasingly, teachers are making effective use of ICT in the delivery of their lessons helped, in some subjects such as science and mathematics, by the acquisition of interactive whiteboards. ICT use by pupils as an integral part of learning is constrained by the lack of school computers.
45. Much teaching is good in the way it prepares pupils for examinations and tests. This is evident in English and science, and in the latter, the teachers' efforts contribute well to the high GCSE science results.
46. Although the greater majority of teaching and learning were good during the inspection, the overall profile showed that the school maintained rather than improved this aspect since the last inspection. A number of subjects have made significant improvements and now demonstrate very good practice that results in very good pupil achievement. Others have various strengths identified above but have made less progress in terms of their teaching and learning strategies. English illustrates this well with lessons that have good features but lean heavily on whole class teaching in which the teacher spends a lot of the time addressing the whole class. This results in too few opportunities for pupils to engage actively in their learning. Even when pupils have much to contribute orally as in a Year 10 poetry lesson, the teacher acted as mediator of the discussion throughout rather than let pupils discuss and develop their ideas with each other. Another drawback of much whole class teaching as practised is the lack of varied learning material to meet the different needs of the pupils. The emphasis on this style of whole class teaching extends to other subjects and was evident during the inspection, in mathematics, geography and design and technology.
47. Pupils with special educational needs are often taught together and benefit from teaching well matched to their needs with excellent support from teaching assistants. All pupils on the register have an individual education plan (IEP). These clearly identify the targets for each pupil and progress towards them is well documented. Teaching staff are aware of these targets and work towards helping the pupils to achieve them. In one ICT lesson the teacher was seen to pay close attention to the pupils' targets and consequently progress in that lesson was good.
48. Although there are up to 100 pupils considered to be bilingual, only one is considered to be in need of specific support from the local authority specialist teacher and this is for one hour a week. The pupil is otherwise well supported by class teachers who enable her to express intelligent views, and to move from everyday conversational English to the formal language required for different tasks and audiences.
49. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall though there is some variation in how well they are used in different subjects. A range of different marking techniques - amongst them various letter systems, marks out of 10, percentages, levels - is used both within and between different subjects and this inconsistency does not best assist the pupils. Although informal discussion or oral comment does take place on how pupils can make improvements in their work, the comments recorded in pupils' written work differ greatly in quality between subjects, rare in some areas, but good specific detail in for instance, physical education, geography, art and design technology. Other subjects such as science and mathematics are developing more rigorous and consistent procedures but overall assessment practice in English is unsatisfactory in terms of advice given to pupils for improvement. The current whole school assessment policy is under review and assessment to improve learning on a week by week basis appropriately remains a school priority for further development. Current procedures are

satisfactory in terms of providing a record of pupil progress and identifying those pupils needing greater encouragement. However, at the moment, best practice is not widely shared between subjects.

50. Review and refinement of targets and teaching programmes within many subjects while satisfactory, also lack consistency. A large amount of data is provided centrally and targets are set across the school. This data is very well used in art, science and physical education but, in the majority of subjects, its use is only satisfactory. Even so, pupils are aware of their targets and how they are doing in general terms, particularly in the GCSE groups. However, in Years 7 to 9, subjects vary considerably in how well they support pupils' progress by informing them of what they need to do to meet their targets and improve the standard of their work. This variation is also evident in the inconsistency in the use of pupil self evaluation.

Sixth form

51. The overall standard of teaching and learning in the sixth form is consistently good. In over 80 per cent of lessons observed, teaching and learning were good or better. In a third of lessons, teaching was very good and on occasion, excellent.
52. Teachers have good specialist skills and a secure understanding of examination requirements. They plan well and set clear objectives for their students. Time is used productively and students' independent learning skills are well supported and developed. Achievement tends to be strongest amongst the most able students, where girls have positive attitudes to work and attend regularly. Most lessons gave scope for students to demonstrate the breadth and depth of work expected at the highest levels. Overall, students make good gains in knowledge and understanding because lessons provide them with the structure to assimilate and make sense of new information. Where teaching is less secure, the range of teaching and learning styles are limited and do not fully exploit the students' intellectual and academic potential in both the practical and contextual aspects. Particular strengths in teaching were observed in the French and design and technology; and in the art and design and history courses where overall provision is very good. In mathematics, English language and literature, geography, sociology, chemistry, physics, religious studies, sports studies, music, ICT, media studies and economics, the teaching and learning in lessons were good.
53. Teachers know their students very well. Where opportunities arise, they are generous in investing personal time to offer academic and personal advice outside lessons. Based on discussions with groups of students, it is clear that they consider teaching to be both interesting and challenging. They particularly value the expertise of their teachers and their readiness to offer individual help.
54. Assessment in the sixth form is good, though it is unsatisfactory in psychology. In almost all subjects, marking is regular and careful, providing students with constructive guidance on how to improve their work. In the best practice, such as in art and history, students are made very aware of the criteria for different grades and students are given very good guidance and regular reviews of their progress and as a result, their effort is well focused. In other subjects it is good. In psychology, target setting is unsatisfactory and marking is limited with no indications in files on how girls can improve the quality of their work

The curriculum

Overall evaluation

The curriculum provided for pupils is good overall. Pupils benefit from a very good range of opportunities for enrichment in the main school, including a full programme of activities beyond the school day. The sixth form curriculum provides a very good number of GCE A-Level courses though lacks some breadth in different types of course and in extra-curricular activities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has successfully sustained a broad and balanced curriculum that includes significant and successful provision of modern foreign languages.
- Recent success in becoming a Visual Arts College is providing greater opportunities for pupils and staff and enhancement to the whole curriculum.
- Pupils in the main school receive an enriching experience from a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including those for the gifted and talented.
- The development of the work related curriculum and accredited vocational pathways for some pupils are currently at a very early stage of development limiting opportunities for some pupils.
- The curriculum is well supported by good staffing and increasingly good accommodation and resources though there are still shortages in ICT equipment.
- There is scope for more practical and vocational courses in the sixth form and greater extra-curricular opportunities for the students.

Commentary

55. The curriculum covers the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and a good curriculum is provided for pupils overall. Curriculum breadth is good in Years 7–9 and in Years 10-11 but only satisfactory in the sixth form where small numbers limit the range of courses on offer beyond an otherwise very good variety of GCE A-Level subjects.
56. The main school provides enriching experiences for pupils through a high level of participation in activities in Arts and PE and through a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The pupils in Years 10 and 11 have particularly good opportunities for enrichment. In the sixth form, however, the extra-curricular activities offered to students are more limited. In addition to the wide range of open access curriculum enrichment activities, teachers actively encourage girls to join clubs and societies outside school. Where appropriate, girls are granted leave of absence for participation in events arranged by the LEA and other organisations.
57. Gifted and talented pupils and sixth form students are encouraged in a number of ways. The school runs an LEA funded summer school for gifted artists in Year 5, 6 and 9. University College, London has been running forensic science master classes at the school for Year 9 students. A teacher oversees a distance learning class in GCSE Latin. Year 13 students have attended courses at Villiers Park, Cambridge, and the Sutton Trust Summer School has been offered to students in Year 12. Year 11 students are being encouraged to attend Aim Higher summer schools, funded by the European Union, in 2005.
58. In Year 7 the curriculum is enriched by drama and then in Years 8 and 9, for most pupils, by a second language. A wide range of academic subjects is offered in Years 10 and 11 and Year 9 pupils surveyed are mainly very positive about the option choices. The school has begun to explore further vocational courses and alternative qualifications for some pupils, whose needs are not met by the current offer, but so far only provides accredited courses in business, childcare as well as Applied ICT through a link with a local college. The school is aware that for pupils not taking ICT as an option, the ICT provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is only adequate, but this is being addressed next year with the introduction of a new qualification. Provision for citizenship and personal, health and social education is good and while careers guidance and work related experience are satisfactory, there is scope for further development.
59. Overall the expertise of teaching staff is very well matched to the curriculum so that pupils are mostly taught well and learn well. In Years 10 and 11 pupils receive high levels of specialist teaching in music, ICT, geography, modern languages and in science, where specialists in biology, physics and chemistry are very well deployed. However, in Years 7-9 in geography, drama and RE, there is some teaching by non-specialists.

60. The school is using its new status as a Visual Arts College to provide greater opportunities for curriculum development through community and partner school links, staff development and enhancement to the whole curriculum. Developments include whole school training in arts across the curriculum through display and different media in every subject area and the use of arts to better engage pupil interest by developing more exciting teaching and learning styles. Further innovative practice is seen in science, where use of detailed assessment data identifies weaknesses in topic coverage; in maths with a focus on algebra; in a modern languages assessment for learning project, using diagnostic comments instead of marks; as well as in ICT with more varied learning strategies.
61. Blending a new building onto the old has provided good accommodation and resources, though funding for new equipment has been limited, particularly in the lack of computers which, as a proportion, are currently half of those found in secondary schools nationally. Even so, ICT is much improved since the previous inspection. Having the school on one site has made many aspects of management easier though the housing of 1228 pupils on one site creates some problems. There is still a shortage of space for assembling large groups and the dining room is too small for the number wanting to use it. There are some 'teething' problems in the new building that need correction under the warranty. For example, the otherwise excellent ICT suite needs air-conditioning and some history rooms lack ventilation and window blinds. A fine sports hall and an all-weather pitch are two major additions to much improved sports facilities. The new science laboratories are also of high quality and provide an enhanced learning environment. Points of potential congestion in corridors and on stairways have been largely overcome by one-way systems. In the school as a whole, most classrooms are sufficiently large to teach the curriculum effectively. Overall, a most striking feature is the high standard of school maintenance and high quality displays that ensure a very clean and attractive environment.

Sixth form

62. The school makes provision for a very good range of AS and A-level subjects. However, it caters less successfully for those seeking vocational courses. The school has plans to broaden its curriculum to accord with its newly acquired Visual Arts College status.
63. The mix of planned lessons and events enables the sixth form to meet the RE requirement.
64. All students add breadth to their sixth form experience by following an AS-level course in citizenship in Year 12 and an obligatory AS-level general studies course in Year 13. However, this means that students take a larger than average total number of AS and A-Levels and some lower attaining students have difficulty in meeting these demands. Satisfactory provision is made for the development of the key skills in communication, numeracy and ICT. Students have the opportunity to refine their communication and use of number skills through their subject courses. The use of ICT is good in most subjects. Students' independent work demonstrates that they are competent, autonomous users of ICT.
65. Students are encouraged to participate in a range of external events. Every year, girls volunteer for inclusion in the national Bar Mock Trials; others compete at the annual Rotary public speaking competitions. A weakness of the curriculum is the limited range of extra-curricular activities offered at the school on a weekly basis. The school intends to extend the range of enrichment opportunities provided in the sixth form. There is no timetabled physical education in the sixth form, except for those taking an AS or A-Level course in sport studies.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes good provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils and provides them with satisfactory support, advice and guidance. Academic monitoring is still being developed across the school. The school seeks the views of pupils and students but does not adequately evaluate and act upon them in the main school or the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's system for providing pastoral care does not fully meet the needs of the new combined school.
- The pupils are generally well cared for in a safe and healthy environment but improvements are needed in the procedures for ensuring this is consistently the case across the school.
- Pupils' views, while sought, are not analysed in sufficient depth to allow them to feel fully involved in helping to influence their life in school.

Commentary

66. The staff ensures the school is a very caring environment but many pupils do not feel able to confide in someone if they have a problem. Over one-third of pupils, who answered the pre-inspection questionnaire, didn't feel there was someone to whom they could turn in such a situation. A pupil's first point of contact is the form teacher but opportunities for private discussion are limited. There are the heads of year, two of whom are currently not in place, as well as the key stage co-ordinators for Years 7-9 and Years 10-11 respectively, but their availability is limited by their teaching commitments. A counsellor and behaviour support worker visit the school for one day a week each and their advice is sought by an increasing number of students. In discussions with pupils, it became clear that many would welcome a greater level of support from persons other than teachers. The lack of an adequately staffed centre to assist pupils with behavioural and emotional problems limits the school's capability to provide personal support, advice and guidance for its pupils. Most pupils receive regular support for their academic progress; the agenda for their academic mentoring personal interview is very thorough. Those less academically inclined, however, don't always receive the level of support appropriate to their needs.
67. A thorough annual health and safety audit of the school is carried out by the local education authority, making recommendations for the school to action. This is well supported by the members of the health and safety committee who further examine the whole school during the school year. However, there is scope for more careful recording of remedial action taken. Overall, the school is a safe environment though there are several shortcomings in the recently built part of the school relating to ventilation and air conditioning. Risk assessments for school visits and residential trips are very thorough but those for activities within the school vary in their rigour between departments. The provision for child protection is good although the newly appointed designated officer is yet to attend the full training but she is well supported by her predecessor who has. The prompt response to a pupil who fainted during a lesson demonstrated the effectiveness of the first aid procedures.
68. Academic monitoring is satisfactory but is inconsistent across departments and many pupils are not given clear information on how they can improve their work. From the detailed assessment records that are available pupils are placed into teaching groups or bands according to ability and to provide appropriate learning opportunities. Once in a band, it is rare for a pupil to switch into another band. Initial target levels or grades are determined by senior staff, but may be refined within subject areas. Monitoring of performance identifies pupils who are at risk of underachieving and they are referred to the pastoral team for support. It is acknowledged that this process is not as efficient as it might be, partly through limited tutor time availability for detailed discussion to take place. In subject reports to parents too, often the comments are generalist instead of identifying particular items for pupils to focus upon that can lead to improvements. Very good practice occurs especially in art and design, where pupils' work is assessed on a range of aspects, levels given, targets indicated for development of a particular skill and information provided on what each pupil should do next.
69. In the autumn term, the school carried out a survey of pupils' views. The report on its findings highlighted the very positive responses to three questions but did not comment on the negative response to several of the other questions. For example 32 per cent disagreed with the statement 'the school is interested in the views of its pupils'. No attempt has so far been made to feed back the survey results to pupils or follow-up the reasons behind the adverse

opinions. More positively, the school council, consisting of a representative from each form, meets every half term and discusses aspects of school life, particularly concerning pupils, such as the lunchtime arrangements, uniform and movement around the school. Overall the school has begun to listen to pupils though has been less successful in demonstrating to pupils that it values their views.

Sixth form

70. The school provides good support and guidance for its students. The good relationships within the sixth form are a significant factor in the support the students receive. The advice given by teachers and tutors is based on substantial personal knowledge of each student. The relationship with subject teachers is the strongest feature. Students are kept well informed of their progress through analytical assessment at subject level, and find that their teachers are very accessible. When students fall behind, the sixth form managers can be called upon to act as learning mentors.
71. There are missed opportunities to make effective use of tutors and tutorial time. There is little educational value to the early morning tutorial session. Students are casual in their attitude to tutorials, many expecting to be registered and then return to the common room to join their friends. Thus a valuable quota of learning time is lost on a regular basis. Assemblies are held twice a week and provide a good focus for moral and social issues, including events and activities taking place in the sixth form community. However, the common room setting is not ideally suited to the transmission of important values, as many girls are required to sit in cramped conditions on the floor.
72. The headteacher takes a particular interest in sixth form students and does much to support their personal development. All students in Year 11 have an individual interview with the headteacher to discuss their future objectives.
73. The school would like to raise the number of students staying on to the sixth form as currently only 32 per cent of the Year 11 cohort choose to join Year 12. External students joining the school in Year 12 are provided with good support. The school organises an effective induction programme.
74. The information and guidance received about higher education are good. Students take part in range of higher education activities including visits to universities. Individual students attend summer schools, including those held at Villiers Park. The school encourages students to access higher education prospectuses on line. Satisfactory provision is made for careers guidance; advice is available from Connexions and is co-ordinated by a teacher at the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed a good relationship with its pupils' parents and carers. Links with the community are good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Relationships with other schools and colleges are satisfactory throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are provided with a high standard of information about the school and the standards achieved and progress made by their children.
- The school attempts to involve parents more in their children's learning. Effects have been variable in consistency and success.
- Links with the community do much to improve pupils' learning and develop their social skills but the involvement of the business community is insufficient.
- The school is beginning to develop valuable relationships with other schools in its role as a specialist arts college.

Commentary

75. The prospectus, governors' annual report and website are very well produced and provide parents with all the information they need to know about the school and how it operates. Newsletters, produced twice each term, provide a regular update of individual and school achievements and past and future events. Parents receive a good indication of the progress made by their children through the annual report supported by the interim monitoring reports. These provide data on a pupil's expected key stage 3 SAT level, for Years 7 to 9, and GCSE grade, for Years 10 and 11. They are also given grades for aspects such as attainment, homework and effort. However, there is little information, where a pupil is falling behind, as to the reasons for this and what needs to be done to improve performance. The annual subject reports, in particular, say very little about this. They do not set specific targets for pupils to achieve. With just one formal opportunity for parents to meet with subject teachers a year to discuss such matters, inspectors support the view of around one-fifth of parents, who answered the pre-inspection questionnaire that more could be done in this area.
76. Parents are supportive of the school and the overwhelming majority feels comfortable in approaching it with a question, problem or complaint. The parent teacher association, run by a small number of committed individuals, runs a series of fund-raising activities that enabled it to contribute £5,000 to the specialist schools bid. Many parents also contribute regularly to the school fund. The opportunities to become meaningfully involved in their children's learning are limited. For those with access to the Internet, the school website does provide outline information on what each subject covers. The pupil planners are insufficiently used for communication between parent and school with an inconsistency in their use between form tutors. The school has run workshops to encourage parental support with mixed success. It has also surveyed parents for their views. The results have not yet been shared with them. Despite these good efforts, this lack of feedback might explain why a third of parents who completed the inspection questionnaire, felt insufficiently consulted.
77. The special educational needs co-ordinator has a very good relationship with parents and involves them at all stages of the review process. Parents are able to communicate with the co-ordinator by phone or letter or through their daughter's school diary and they make good use of these opportunities.
78. The school has a wide range of links with the local community. Visitors include representatives from the police, army and forensic science service, who talk about their jobs, coaches in sports such as fencing and a number of artists, speakers and theatre groups and the local clergy. Pupils visit local churches, theatres and many of the national cultural establishments in and around London. The new visual arts centre is becoming a focal point for the local arts community and the school's facilities are used for activities such as gifted and talented workshops and enrichment days during the holidays. There are also good links with local sports clubs that support and develop the school's efforts in developing a sporting ethos amongst its pupils. The school recognises its limited contacts with the business community and has recently joined the Education Business Partnership to address this shortcoming.
79. Good links with the main feeder primary schools have been developed over the years to ensure the smooth transition of their pupils into the school that is well appreciated by the overwhelming majority of parents. The science department teachers take lessons in some schools and joint courses have taken place under the heading 'Where Science Meets the Arts'. Joint projects are also being developed in the visual arts as part of the specialist school programme. Good sporting relationships exist with other secondary schools with matches being played in football, hockey and netball and teams being sent to festivals in sports such as swimming and tag rugby. The link with a nearby college for the provision of a GCSE course in ICT is a good, but rare, example of a link with a post-16 institution. Pupils benefit from the additional experiences provided by trainee teachers within the school. One teacher training institution has identified the school as a centre of excellence for teacher training.

Sixth form

80. There is a good level of contact with parents. Individual meetings are held as required and parents receive an adequate level of information about sixth form events. A meeting convened by the headteacher, and held at the start of Year 12, gives parents a clear view of the school's expectations for the sixth form.
81. A number of students have taken part in work experience as part of their vocational course or upon individual request. However, the school recognises that there is scope to give greater emphasis to work related learning.
82. The school aims to maintain good levels of contact with past students and alumni are regularly invited back to the school to award prizes and speak at careers information sessions.
83. The school contributes to a slender number of wider partnerships. Links with local business are not well developed.
84. Students are positive about the sixth form. They feel that they are very well taught and that the courses provided are stimulating. They appreciate the importance and impact of the good relationships that they enjoy with their teachers and of the individual help and encouragement they receive from them.
85. In discussion, students said they would definitely recommend the sixth form.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall school leadership is good with very good leadership of the headteacher. Management is good overall though certain roles and responsibilities are being developed and modified as the school settles on the one site. Governance is good with the more active governors playing a key part in recent developments.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The senior leadership team, well supported by governors and staff, has maintained an effective school during the recent building and restructuring of the school.
- The headteacher is valued for her very clear vision for the future development of the school and her leadership style enables senior and other staff to take responsibility and show initiative.
- The unsatisfactory leadership and management of the sixth form hinder its development.
- The most active governors provide valuable expertise that has helped the school in its current development.
- The school has well designed systems for staff support and evaluation. There are variations in practice and the whole school self-evaluation process is still to be fully developed.
- Although management systems have been effective in maintaining the school, some aspects such as the tutorial system and assessment are still being established on the new single site.

Commentary

86. The headteacher maintains a positive presence around the school and works hard to promote the school's positive values. What makes her leadership very good is her vision and style of leadership. She has served the school for many years and on becoming headteacher, has established a very clear vision for the school that maintains its traditions while becoming more involved in new developments. Senior colleagues value the direction she provides and the opportunities they have for greater responsibility and personal initiative. The benefits of this are evident in the successful transition to a single site school, good progress in the development of sports, arts and languages and a continuing improvement in standards.
87. The senior leadership team consists of highly committed and very experienced senior managers who readily discuss issues and work cohesively and effectively. Members of the team possess different and, to some extent, complementary strengths. Some see their

primary role as helping run the day-to-day aspects of the school. This has been very important during the past two years when there was substantial building work on both sites. Others in the team make good contributions to recent initiatives including the successful specialist college bid and curriculum and staff development. The senior management team meet three times a week and all play a part in the strategic development of the school.

88. The school benefits from well qualified and experienced middle managers. Leadership is strong in most areas with heads of department leading by example in terms of good teaching and other practice. This is particularly so in those subjects with high standards or which have shown very good improvement, such as modern foreign languages, art and design, physical education and science.
89. Pastoral leaders are effective and pupils value the support they provide. However, the current lack of tutorial time limits the extent to which the heads of year and key stage co-ordinators can develop strong teams to further improve academic monitoring and personal support of pupils.
90. Leadership and management of special educational needs are good. The co-ordinator ensures that communication channels are kept open between staff and between home and school. The teaching assistants are managed and deployed well. They meet once every three weeks to discuss strategy and procedure but there is scope for more regular sharing of information. The department is well supported by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic link governor who not only meets with the special educational needs co-ordinator every week but also assists pupils with individual reading on a weekly basis. The co-ordinator of the gifted and talented programme is energetic and ambitious for the pupils. She has been trained for the post. Under her leadership the school has a very good capacity to improve. Priorities for development include a plan of extension activities and a whole school register. The co-ordination of provision for students for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory though is at a much earlier stage of development in terms of identifying and meeting pupils' needs.
91. New management systems and responsibilities are in the process of being established on the single site. Most of the new arrangements are effective and have not noticeably detracted from the school's good progress. Monitoring and evaluation of provision was considered a weakness in the last inspection and is now much better and at least satisfactory. Members of the senior leadership team have clear responsibility for particular heads of department and those middle managers appreciate the regular support they receive. Performance management is well established, evident in regular, scheduled meetings and documented discussion and target setting in most subjects. However, while the relationship between senior and middle managers is positive and supportive, there is scope for more emphasis on target setting for improvement in some areas. Similarly, team leadership in some subjects lacks development, resulting in less rigorous monitoring and support of individual teachers and consequently, greater inconsistency in practice.
92. Effective systems are in place for the induction of new staff and supply staff. Expectations of those supporting PGCE and graduate trainee students are clear and appropriate and the school is praised for this by its main teacher training partner. As acknowledged above, a well designed performance management system is in place, with thorough explanatory and supporting documentation which includes, for example, a reminder to members of staff who have passed the performance threshold of what continues to be expected of them. Also included are advice on self-appraisal and a checklist of the evidence members of staff should be collecting for their professional development portfolio.
93. Professional development is tailored to the needs of the school as well as those of individual members of staff. In particular, priority is given to training which will help to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school, although training in other areas is not ignored - in pastoral work, for instance. Examples of continuing professional development opportunities are provided for staff, detailing the full range available to them. The career development of

support staff is valued equally and they are encouraged to engage in training leading to professional qualifications.

94. A school self-evaluation process has recently been put in place. The process is still being established and so far its effect has been most noticeable in areas where it has been taken up with most enthusiasm. This success, although uneven to date, demonstrates that the process works well to identify strengths and deal with weaknesses at individual, departmental and whole school level.
95. Governance is good overall. Almost all of the statutory breaches found at the last inspection have been rectified though opportunities for collective worship is still not provided despite considerable progress in providing for daily school assemblies. The active membership of the governing body is about eight governors though efforts continue to involve more of the other elected and nominated governors. The active members are mostly long serving and highly committed to the development of the school. They are well informed and provide considerable professional expertise. This has been essential for the school in terms of legal and financial advice related to the building and management of the new site. Also important has been governors' fundraising support for the school bid to be a specialist college.
96. Financial management is very good. The school has successfully used its previous lower school site to fund what is a doubling of the main site accommodation. It has also been successful in bidding for significant capital and other funding related to its new status as a specialist Visual Arts College. Interactive whiteboards for teaching in mathematics and science were also made possible by involvement in a further ICT initiative.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,790,418	Balance from previous year	27,652
Total expenditure	4,738,347	Balance carried forward to the next	52,071
Expenditure per pupil	3,903		

97. The school uses its budget effectively and any apparent funds carried forward to the next financial year are related to imminent capital projects. Its auditing procedures are rigorous and benefit from well informed key staff who are well supported by the professional expertise of specific governors. The senior managers and governors have used best value and other financial good practice to minimise the costs incurred from taking over school services such as ground and building maintenance and catering.

Sixth form

98. There are weaknesses in the leadership and management of the sixth form that make it unsatisfactory. The head of sixth form and his deputy have positive aspirations for the students in their care, but they have not met several of the key challenges facing the sixth form. A lack of clear strategic thinking and planning has meant that sixth form leaders have not managed performance with sufficient rigour or commitment, and have not always reflected the school's aims and policies in their work. The school has been concerned about the viability of the sixth form, but too little effort has been made to provide a real sense of direction or to effect positive change. Leadership does not reflect a school with ambition. Teamwork is not strong as policies and procedures are not always clear and there is no sixth form handbook as a means of reference. Lack of consistency is particularly apparent in respect to attendance procedures. Overall, insufficient emphasis is placed on raising performance

through meticulous record keeping, rigorous monitoring and a relentless focus on student achievement.

99. The lack of leadership and management is reflected in the missed opportunities to use tutors and the scheduled tutor time for purposeful activity. In addition to day-to-day management weaknesses that adversely affect attendance and punctuality, the school's strategies for monitoring and evaluating sixth form performance are also lacking in development. Overall, planning for change and improvement and evaluation of outcomes are not yet effective in ensuring the continuing development of the sixth form.
100. Despite the above weaknesses, students greatly value their sixth form experience and outcomes are in line with and in some areas, better than expected. Much of this can be attributed the considerable strengths of the subject staff and work of headteacher and some senior managers in looking to improve matters. Despite clear shortcomings, the sixth form leadership has some positive aspects notably in enhancing the personal and social development of the students, through the organisation of two residential conferences held at the beginning and end of Year 12. Students spoke highly of their experiences in Derbyshire and Suffolk respectively, and especially of the focus placed on team building activities.
101. Funding is used in a cost-effective way to give students a good quality of teaching and course provision within the constraints of a smaller than average sixth form. The existence of the sixth form does represent a staffing cost against the funding of the main school. However, the opportunities for staff to teach higher level courses have helped the school avoid the considerable staffing and recruitment problems that exist in the area and maintain a well qualified and specialist workforce.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work related learning

Provision for work related learning is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work experience for Year 11 pupils is of a good quality.
- The school does not have a clear view of the work related provision of every pupil in Years 10 and 11.
- The majority of curriculum areas, including citizenship, are making a contribution to the development of work related knowledge and skills.
- Only two curriculum areas are currently offering a vocational course.

Commentary

102. Pupils' understanding of employment and the world of work are developed from Year 7 onwards within the personal, health and social education curriculum, which encompass careers education and guidance. A specialist team of teachers deliver this curriculum and in lessons seen the quality of teaching was good. As a result of whole school inset, a number of subject areas are also making a greater contribution to the development of work related skills. However, links between subject areas and local companies are limited.
103. In Year 11, all pupils experience a two-week work experience placement with the help of a specialist outside organisation. The experience is well prepared and reviewed within the personal, health and social education and careers education curriculum, supported by the Havering Education Business Partnership. By Year 11, all pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of the workplace and have a satisfactory repertoire of work related skills.

104. The school provides a very limited range of vocational courses. The quality of teaching on these courses is good. However further vocational courses will become available in September linked to the schools' new visual arts specialist status developments.
105. The overall management of work related provision is satisfactory. Whole school in-service training and a curriculum audit have resulted in most curriculum areas identifying the contribution their subject areas are making. Even so, the co-ordinator is aware of areas of provision that need improving including more careful planning for individual pupil needs in Years 10-11.
106. The provision for careers education and guidance is satisfactory. A basic careers curriculum is delivered within the personal, health and social education and careers curriculum in Years 7-9 though not always identified clearly as such within the programme. In Year 7 it includes some economic awareness and activities that involve pupils identifying their personal strengths and interests while in Year 8 the Connexions adviser works with staff and pupils in active group work to develop pupils' decision making skills. In Year 9, emphasis is placed on helping pupils make informed curriculum choices based on interests and career interests. Subsequent years contain an explicit careers programme that prepares pupils for work experience, further education and future careers. Visiting speakers and theatre groups enhance provision at different points.
107. The Connexions adviser linked to the school provides very good quality support to pupils referred to him. Although the school has an up-to-date and comprehensive library of careers resources, access to them is limited due to its present location. There is also limited access to information and communication technology within curriculum time.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in all years show a positive attitude to their English lessons and are eager to work hard and succeed. As a result, pupils attain good standards and achieve well.
- In Key Stage 3, pupils' written work reflects a good range of tasks requiring a variety of styles, genres and registers.
- In Key Stage 4, attention to the production of pupils' coursework and their exam preparation is rigorous and effective.
- Monitoring of the work of members of the department is not rigorous enough.
- Although lessons are often delivered with pace and energy, there is a lack of variety in classroom practice.
- There is no consistent policy for assessing pupils' work in Key Stage 3.
- There is a warm working relationship between most pupils and their teachers, which also contributes to high standards and good achievement.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to practise information and communication technology skills as part of their routine English work.

Commentary

108. In 2004, results at the end of Year 9 were above average when compared with all schools nationally and with schools in a similar context. In 2004, results at the end of Year 11 were well above average when compared with all schools nationally and above average against similar schools. In comparison with their performance in other subjects, pupils attained slightly better in English literature and slightly less well in English.
109. Standards in English are above average. In Years 7 – 9, most pupils are able to write confidently in a variety of styles, producing fluent narrative and explanatory or persuasive pieces, as well as experimenting in a range of verse forms. They are also able to respond intelligently to literature and media texts, analysing character and form. In Years 10 - 11, pupils can discuss texts sensitively and are able to express their ideas well in longer pieces of work prepared for examination coursework. Overall, standards are well above average when compared to schools nationally.

110. Achievement in English is good. On entry, pupils have reached standards that equate with national averages. Progress is good and value added data show achievement well above national average from Year 6 to Year 11 and from Year 9 to Year 11. In Year 9 and Year 11, focused exam preparation and guidance on the production of coursework helps pupils to achieve well. In other years, particularly Years 7 and 8, there is no consistent policy for assessing pupils' work. Marking rarely offers pupils advice on how to improve their work and there is no system for tracking pupils' progress. Pupil level data, which is available in the school, are not being used to plan appropriate interventions to meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. Data are not being used to set targets for individual pupils, groups and classes.
111. Teaching and learning in English are good. Pupils in all years show a positive attitude to their English lessons and are eager to work hard and succeed. There is a warm working relationship between most pupils and their teachers. In a very good lesson, pupils in a lower ability Year 11 group were able to identify the presentational features of a publicity leaflet, because their willingness to learn was matched by their teacher's concern that every pupil in the group should be able to understand the concepts involved. Although lessons are often delivered with pace and energy, there is a lack of variety in classroom practice. Teachers spend a lot of time addressing the class as a whole. There is little or no attempt to differentiate work according to need or ability. The full variety of teaching and learning styles is not reflected in practice and there are relatively few opportunities for pupils to engage actively in their learning. Pupils in a Year 10 class, working on a set poem, had much to contribute orally, but their teacher retained the role of mediator between them and the poem for virtually the whole of the lesson. Lessons often lack the focus that a series of structured tasks would provide. An exception to this was a Year 10 lesson addressing the pros and cons of imposing curfews on young people. Pupils benefited from the opportunity to work together to clarify their ideas on the topic.
112. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department team is cohesive and works together well. However, monitoring of the work of members of the department is not rigorous. In observed lessons, there was little evidence of a consistency of approach. For example, learning objectives were not always shared with pupils and the quality of starter activities varied widely. The shared values and procedures which lead to sustained improvement in English teaching were rarely evident.
113. The relocation of the school onto one site means that the English Department can retain its central base, without staff having to travel to the lower school. However, pupils do not have enough opportunity to practise skills of information and communication technology in their English lessons. When English teachers want their pupils to use information and communication technology as part of their work, a specially equipped room has to be booked well in advance. When visiting a specialist room, pupils usually have to share a computer.
114. Improvement since the last inspection is good, broadly in line with expectations. Standards have been maintained and pupils still achieve well. As noted in the previous inspection report, pupils still enjoy their lessons and concentration is still good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

115. The provision for the development of literacy skills across the curriculum is good. Standards of English language and literacy skills, as demonstrated by pupils and sixth form students, are very good.
116. There is a whole school literacy policy which has been in place for two and a half years. This policy was drawn up by a working group led by members of the English department. It aims to ensure that, across the curriculum as a whole, pupils experience a wide range of styles as they practise reading and writing, speaking and listening. The policy also encourages

departments to help pupils to develop the specific literacy skills needed for their particular subject.

117. Many departments emphasise keywords and specialist vocabulary. This is done effectively in PE and music. Most departments offer opportunities for pupils to clarify their ideas orally, through discussion and good questioning. In art, sixth form students practise this in regular tutorials with their teacher to assess their progress in the subject.

118. However, there is no formal monitoring of the literacy policy and its recommendations are not applied consistently across the school. In science, good literacy skills are demonstrated by pupils, but there is little reinforcement by the direct teaching of these skills in lessons. In history, pupils write well, but errors are rarely corrected.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern languages is **excellent**.

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

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Improvement since last inspection	Excellent

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good because of teachers' high expectations and very effective practice.
- Pupils are very well engaged in their learning and almost all take a GCSE with a significant number taking a second modern foreign language.
- Leadership and management are excellent and have accelerated the substantial improvement since the last inspection.

Commentary

French

119. By the end of Year 9, pupils make very good progress and in 2004 two thirds of Year 9 pupils achieved well above national standards in National Curriculum teacher assessments in French. GCSE results in French were also well above average.

120. Standards seen in French in Years 7, 8 and 9 during the inspection are well above average overall. In Years 10-11, the standards seen in French were well above average. Pupils' listening and reading skills are very well developed overall. Pupils generally demonstrate very good grammatical knowledge and accuracy and speaking skills in lessons.

121. These results represent very good progress overall in French. Pupils are grouped by ability in Year 7 and are then able to progress according to their ability. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in smaller classes created for them. Pupils in each band follow different schemes of work appropriate for their ability and progress is regularly monitored. Pupils continue to make very good progress in Years 10-11 and in 2004 three quarters of pupils in Year 11 achieved Grade C or better at GCSE and over a third made excellent progress and achieved very high grades at GCSE.

German

122. German is introduced as a second language from Year 8 for pupils in the upper and middle bands and in 2004 standards achieved in the GCSE were well above average nationally. Although pupils start the German course a year later than French, they make very good progress in German over the four years of study. In 2004 a third of the pupils entered made excellent progress and achieved very high grades at GCSE.
123. Standards seen in German in Years 7,8 and 9 during the inspection were well above average overall. In Years 10 and 11, standards are also well above average. Pupils' demonstrate listening and reading skills of a high standard. Pupils have very good grammatical knowledge and their speaking and writing skills are very well developed.
124. In both subjects, higher attaining pupils achieve very well. They study two languages and a significant proportion achieve very highly in both. In addition the number of pupils taking a GCSE in two languages has increased. Less able pupils also achieve very well in languages. The proportion of Year 11 pupils successfully taking a GCSE in a language is double the national figure. Attaining such high standards from such high numbers of entries represents excellent achievement by pupils across the ability range.
125. Teaching in French and German is very good overall. Homework is regularly set and relevant. In very good lessons seen, prior learning completed for homework is well integrated into listening and speaking activities in the lesson and teachers involve pupils in self and peer assessment so that they improve their accuracy in writing and pronunciation. In Years 8 and 9, the teaching is very good and pupils respond well to their teachers' enthusiasm. The teachers plan effectively, use appropriate target language expertly and practise new language with fast paced, active pair and group work. In one lower band class in Year 7, the teaching was judged satisfactory because the teacher did not challenge pupils sufficiently.
126. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching is very good overall. In French in Years 10 and 11, the teaching observed is good, with some very good and some satisfactory teaching seen. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of engagement and quality of outcomes and focus strongly on developing pupils' skills and knowledge for the higher grades. In French teachers consistently use verb wall charts and sentence grids effectively to train pupils at all levels to improve and extend what they can say and write. In one lesson where the teaching was very good, a teacher structured the learning in small steps, used focused questioning to check pupils' understanding and reinforced the learning at each stage, enabling pupils to progress and tackle more challenging activities with confidence. In other very good lessons, pupils learn actively, use the target language themselves and ask questions. Some satisfactory teaching was seen in two lessons, an upper band set in Year 10 and a middle band set in Year 11, where insufficient practice and pace affected the engagement of some pupils.
127. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 in German is very good. Expectations are high and teachers use the target language effectively. The teachers convey their enthusiasm for the subject and relationships are very good and promote very high levels of engagement from pupils. Activities are varied and sometimes active and pupils participate successfully because planning is strong and pupils are well trained and can work collaboratively and responsibly.
128. Leadership and management of subjects and of the department are excellent overall. The relatively new head of department has established clear priorities and policies and delegates responsibilities effectively among the strongly committed team. She has gained the confidence of pupils with a greater number than previously now taking the French AS course in the sixth form this year. Textbooks are supplied to individual pupils and materials are well chosen to develop a challenging and varied curriculum. Resources are very well managed. There are two languages assistants who are effectively deployed. The programme of extra-curricular activities is very good and includes events for gifted and talented pupils, links to pen friends and a visit abroad. The amount of curricular time for languages contributes very favourably towards raising standards.

129. Modern languages has made excellent progress since the last inspection. Modern languages was a key issue for action in the last inspection report. All issues raised then have been addressed. Curriculum time has been increased and standards overall have improved from below average to well above average nationally. High attainers now achieve very well. Teaching quality and methodology have improved. The relatively new head of department has built on this very good progress and leadership and management are now excellent. Teaching and learning are being developed and monitored and there is a growing consistency across the department with some good practice in assessment for learning that could be shared across the school.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in national tests are consistently high, reflecting strengths in teaching and learning.
- Pupils are well-motivated and attentive, take pride in their presentation of work, and receive good support both in and beyond class.
- Pupil progress records are very good, but there is a lack of clear written guidance on how pupils can improve their work, and inconsistency in marking styles is confusing to pupils.
- Learning is strongly promoted through very good use of interactive whiteboards, but there is insufficient use by pupils of ICT within mathematics lessons.

Commentary

130. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are well above national averages, and above those of similar schools. In 2004, two-thirds of pupils attained levels above national expectations, with one-third gaining the top two levels. Overall, over 85 per cent reach at least national expectations.

131. At GCSE in 2004 two-thirds of pupils obtained grades A*-C, well above the national averages for all pupils and for girls only. This maintains a slight but steady upward trend over recent years.

132. Work during the inspection confirms similar standards. Higher-attaining pupils in all years show very good mathematical skills, supported by careful presentation, clear indication of method, and quality output. More pupils are now studying for higher tier GCSE mathematics, the result of the growth in success by the end of Year 9. Recent analysis of examination questions has led to steps being taken to reinforce work in Years 7-9 on, for instance, negative numbers and percentages.

133. Most pupils enter the school with standards in mathematics above national averages. They make particularly good progress in Years 7-9, achieving well. The rate of progress is less marked in Years 10-11, but achievement is still good.
134. Teaching and learning are good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Pupils receive very clear and accurate instruction. They are taught to set work out neatly and to show full and appropriate details of method of calculation - presentation of work is impressive. Lessons are orderly, have pace and purpose. Teachers make very good use of the versatility of interactive whiteboards as a powerful teaching resource and an extra stimulus to learning. Expectations are high, illustrated well with a Year 8 class confidently and successfully problem-solving using Pythagoras' theorem. In many lessons teaching, however, tends to be too teacher-dominated so many pupils are passive learners, their participation often restricted to the occasional answering of questions rather than more active involvement. Nevertheless pupils are willing workers, attentive, well-motivated and diligent, and proficient at accomplishing both class-work and homework – which is regularly set. For those pupils who may not have understood a topic or are experiencing difficulties the regular maths clinics held at lunchtimes are much appreciated. Pupil-teacher relationships are very good.
135. Support for pupils with special educational needs is variable, though overall they make good progress, as do the small number of pupils from ethnic backgrounds. In the better lessons, teachers take due account of needs, beyond the basic grouping of pupils by ability, as in a very good lesson on ratios with a lower-attaining Year 7 class. Statemented pupils often have a teaching assistant present in class enabling them to access the work fully, and the joint planning with the class teacher is good.
136. Marking of work is largely with ticks. Assessment methods are inconsistent between teachers, and pupils are confused with the variety of schemes in use, even though each has its merits. There is very little written comment on ways pupils could improve their work, though advice may be given orally. Pupils in examination years are generally aware of target grades or levels.
137. Leadership and management are good. Performance management is fully in place, there are good links with senior managers and good practice is shared by the teaching team. A detailed data-base contains schemes of work, assessment records, and general departmental information. Some of this needs updating, delayed partly through impact of the site alterations. Pupils' computer skills are used in coursework projects, notably data handling applications, but only on rare occasions do pupils use ICT in mathematics lessons, and this is unsatisfactory. Higher-attaining pupils enter mathematics challenge competitions, gold and silver awards often being gained, and an occasional pupil even goes on to national events.
138. The many good features noted at the last inspection continue and the rising standards indicate good improvement since. There is much to be proud of, and with greater attention to monitoring, fewer teacher-dominated lessons, and more ICT application, standards should move higher still.

Mathematics across the curriculum

139. Most girls enter the school with good standards of numeracy. All are placed into teaching groups according to ability, based upon a variety of test results. During Years 7-9 calculations of angles, perimeters and areas, work on sequences, use of decimals, substitution into formulae, basic data handling and use of graphs all, for instance, strengthen numeric skills, particularly of lower-attainers. Mental skills are also developed and pupils are taught to use calculators appropriately. Higher-attainers can determine volumes, apply trigonometric techniques, and deal with inequalities and algebraic equations. By Year 11 most pupils are confident in both numeric and graphical work, achieving well.
140. Consequently, except for lower attaining pupils, the mathematical skills required in other subjects present few problems to pupils. They draw and measure accurately in design technology, including applying ergonomic principles in textiles or resistant material lessons to

costume fitting for a play. They use formulae and graphs well in science, undertake 24-hour clock calculations and use pie charts in French, analyse data and compile population and climate graphs in geography, and understand rhythm and graphic scores in music. Links between mathematics and geography have been developed in use of shopping habit surveys, and with art in pattern design, tessellations, scale and perspective.

141. A cross-curricular numeracy policy is in place. Coordination, however, between mathematics and other departments of common approaches to numeracy, especially the drawing of graphs and charts, is insufficiently undertaken, so some pupils also experience problems in transferring numeracy skills between subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership of the subject has enabled the department to make significant improvements since the previous inspection.
- Recent GCSE results have risen sharply through good teaching and effective monitoring of pupils' progress.
- Accurate recording of assessment data from tests, examinations and modules and appropriate analyses of these have led to very effective monitoring of pupils' progress.
- The good teaching and monitoring enabled pupils to achieve well by the end of Year 11.
- Pupils' passive attitudes in class and an unwillingness to engage teachers in their learning processes restrict progress in knowledge and understanding in some classes.
- Instances of unclear and irregular marking of pupils' work fail to inform pupils of how they might improve.
- The high standard of the new laboratories and facilities and ICT resources for teaching have enhanced pupils' learning experience.

Commentary

142. Results of Year 9 national tests in 2004 were above the national average. The attainment of pupils on entry to Year 7 over the past five years has improved steadily and is now above average. In relation to similar schools, that had had the same level of attainment on entry to the school in Year 7, these national test results represent satisfactory progress and achievement by the end of Year 9. Results in GCSE have improved significantly over recent years and in 2004 were well above average. This reflects good achievement by the end of Year 11. Achievement levels and standards are raised in Years 9 and 11 through vigorous revision programmes before the national tests and examinations respectively. Because of the very effective use of assessment data, teachers track pupils' progress and target those who need extra support.

143. The standard of work seen in Years 7-9 was in line the national average overall and pupils looked to be making sufficiently good progress to be able to reach above average standards by the end of Year 9. In the Years 10 to 11 the standard was well above average overall and progress was clearly good. During 2004, whilst the new school was being built, the department was unable to use the laboratories for long periods of time. This had a detrimental effect on pupils' progress generally but particularly between Years 7 and 9. Currently there is still an imbalance in the curriculum because pupils are given insufficient opportunities to develop their understanding of concepts through investigative, practical science. Pupils with special educational needs made good progress in all years through being placed in appropriate teaching groups and receiving structured and supportive teaching. No significant differences were observed in achievement between girls in different ethnic groups. Attitudes, with respect to behaviour and co-operation, are good but pupils are too often passive agents in their learning process and are not encouraged enough to interact with the teacher. This is not promoted by the nature of most lessons, where the teacher adopts a single teaching strategy from the front of the class.
144. Teaching and learning are good in all years though most effective in Years 10 and 11 because timetabling allows each teacher to teach his or her specialist science discipline. The teaching is more challenging as teachers more often press pupils to work logically from first principles, or from their prior understanding, towards a new concept. This is enhanced by the wider use of ICT resources in these years, such as interactive whiteboards. This was evident in a Year 10 lesson on the mechanisms of kidney functions. During the lesson, through well-structured questions, the opportunity to research answers and being able to use simulated models on the whiteboard themselves, the class was moved from a weak understanding of the concepts to above average standards at GCSE. Good planning and the sharing of learning objectives with the class is evident in all years and leads to well controlled and purposeful lessons. The few less structured lessons seen, where the timing and pace are unsatisfactory, led to a reduced interest from the class and limited progress. Homework is generally used constructively and enhances the learning from the lesson. The linking of homework to the assessment of pupils' understanding of concepts taught in lessons is not always clear enough.
145. The department is very well led. There is a clear vision for the development of the subject and an energetic commitment to raising standards. The dramatic improvement in GCSE results is an example. Management is good. Internal departmental assessment records of tests and examinations, used to monitor and track pupils, set targets, review curriculum and determine consequent staff development, have helped to improve teaching and learning strategies and raised standards. The impact of the application of these has been stronger and more effective in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Marking and immediate feedback to pupils is not wholly adequate, as some pupils are unsure of what they have to do to improve their knowledge and understanding before moving on.
146. Taking into account the recent disruption to provision caused by building work, the subject has shown significant improvement in provision since the previous inspection. The number gaining A* to C grades has doubled to standards well above the national average. The use of records of assessments has greatly improved and provides a powerful tool for increasing the department's potential for further success. The very good new accommodation is having a positive impact on the learning environment. ICT resources for teaching are providing more opportunities for effective learning though there are still shortages in areas such as data logging.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good in taking the subject forward.
- The good teaching results in good progress in all years and is raising standards.
- Assessment is good because pupils know how to improve their work.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about the subject, work hard and behave very well.
- There is a very effective link with the local college and pupils in Years 10 and 11 are benefiting from this provision.
- Resources are insufficient and the need to share computers limits opportunities for independent learning.
- The temporary arrangement to deliver the ICT core entitlement across other subjects in Years 10-11 only just meets the requirement.

Commentary

147. By the end of Year 9, according to teacher assessment, standards are above the national average. Results in Applied GCSE are above the national average.
148. During the inspection, standards seen were above average throughout all year groups. Pupils come from a number of different primary schools and standards on entry are variable but overall about average. As a result of successful work schemes, pupils' progress over time in Years 7-9 is good. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils. The department has identified the gifted and talented pupils but there is currently no specific programme for them, although there is appropriate extension work available in lessons that enable them to achieve well.
149. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are following accredited examinations are achieving well and reaching standards above the national average. There is a very good link for those following a course in Applied GCSE at Havering College. They are achieving very well and respond positively to the more mature working environment. However, those taking the GCSE short course in 2004, which included all pupils in Year 10, did not achieve as well as expected, due to the effect of the building programme and the resulting lack of access to computers for over half a term. This year, the subject is taken as an after school option and these pupils are very positive about their work and are achieving well. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are not taking ICT examination courses continue to improve their ICT knowledge and skills sufficiently, within other subjects, though access and opportunities vary considerably.
150. Teaching of ICT is good overall with some very good features. Very good subject knowledge, very strong relationships and a high level of challenge enable pupils to learn well and make

good progress. Good individual support helps less able pupils and those with special educational needs to achieve well. Questioning is used skilfully to find out what pupils know and to reinforce previous learning. Pupils are in general very well managed and therefore behaviour is very good. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards ICT and are enthusiastic and eager to learn. They have a good understanding of their National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades and assessment helps them know how to achieve better. A constraint on otherwise good pupil progress is the need for pupils to share computers which limits opportunities for independent learning.

151. Leadership and management are good. The head of department provides a good role model. She has a clear vision for improvement and a firm sense of direction. She has successfully revised schemes of work and is aware that it will need evaluating. There are appropriate plans in place for a new accreditation for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. The head of department ensures that the teaching and planning of specialist staff in the department is monitored and has built up an effective team who support each other well. There are opportunities for all staff in the school to receive training, including in the use of the new interactive whiteboards and graphics and presentation packages. There is appropriate development planning, with an awareness of the need to promote a virtual learning environment to include access online to learning resources, assessment and guidance and in particular to include the use of email. At this time, the website is in the early stages of development. There is very good support provided by the network manager and technician.
152. Although some of the issues related to the use of ICT across the curriculum have not been addressed from the last inspection, the department itself has made a good improvement as it is keeping up with current national developments. The accommodation is now good in size and layout. Rooms lack air conditioning. Despite the school's recent efforts to improve resources the ratio of computers per pupil is well below government targets.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

153. ICT across the school is satisfactory though lack of resources inhibits development. There is a whole school policy to ensure that there are full opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their ICT capability in all subjects. The use of ICT is detailed in all subject documentation, but limited resources and access to computers is restricting this use and is a barrier to learning. For example, in English, lack of accessible facilities has made it impossible for them to plan a systematic programme of ICT application. Also, there is limited access to and use of ICT in mathematics and science though teachers make considerable use of ICT in delivering their lessons.
154. Computer aided design and manufacture is a significant aspect of design and technology despite a lack of computers and Internet research and applications such as spreadsheets are well used. Pupils similarly use ICT for creating graphs and researching the web in science. Pupils use subject specialist equipment in music and the use of ICT has a positive effect on learning, such as being able to hear authentic sounds and using multi-layered tracks.
155. There are some examples of very good teacher use of ICT when using the interactive whiteboards. In mathematics, they are used extremely well and are a powerful teaching medium, very much appreciated by the pupils. It is noteworthy that in many classes, the pupils also use the boards for testing out answers to questions and demonstrating diagrams.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall and this contributes effectively to pupils' learning.
- Examination results at GCSE are well above the national average reflecting students' good progress and achievement.
- Most pupils have very positive attitudes towards work and this assists progress in learning.
- Good leadership and management have led to improvements in teaching and the curriculum.
- Opportunities for fieldwork and the development of practical skills are too limited in Years 8 and 9.
- A small amount of teaching is still over teacher directed to the detriment of the development of independent learning skills.
- Assessment procedures are improving. Target setting and regular day-to-day formative assessment however, is in its infancy.

Commentary

156. GCSE in 2004 results were well above average and have risen over recent years. Girls did better in geography than in their other subjects. They achieved well in relation to predicted grades set at the beginning of the course. The percentage gaining higher A*/A grades was significantly above average.
157. Current standards at the end of Year 9 are above average and well above average in Year 11.
158. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 quickly acquire good skills in map work and can undertake geographical enquiries. Their written work is generally very good and their use of number is well developed. Pupils develop a good understanding of how physical and human aspects of geography interrelate and of the issues surrounding human development.
159. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. Pupils gain a good understanding of geographical concepts. In urban geography, for example, they analyse theoretical models of city structures and identify reasons for different types of land use. They have a clear understanding of the positive and negative effects of out-of-town shopping centres. Many display very good knowledge and understanding of the characteristics and processes within the hydrological cycle. Pupils use computers well to analyse and present data. Standards have risen since the last inspection.

160. Teaching and learning overall are good, with some very good practice. Most lessons have clear objectives and teachers quickly engage pupils with an effective starter activity. In the main part of the lesson, appropriate and varied tasks are used to develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils are challenged appropriately in most lessons and expectations are high. In lessons on population distribution in Year 8, for example, students responded very well and made very good gains in learning as a result of accurate, engaging and skilled teaching. In a very small percentage of lessons teaching is poor, mainly as a consequence of inadequate planning, poor class management and less than satisfactory attitudes to learning. Some lessons are still over teacher-directed to the detriment of the growth of independent learning skills.
161. Most lessons, but not all, finish with a crisp test of what has been achieved. Overall learning is good and students move on quickly in their understanding. In a majority of lessons they are expected to think for themselves and learn independently. Work is marked consistently but the use of constructive written comments to help pupils improve their work is sometimes limited. A system of self-assessment has been recently introduced which enables students to assess their own progress across units of the syllabus but the formative procedures and the use of assessment data is still in its infancy.
162. The subject is well led. The department has carried out a thorough self evaluation identifying appropriate areas for action. Schemes of work and lesson plans are good and the department is well resourced the subject now has an effective learning environment in the two specialist rooms. Fieldwork, to develop practical skills and test theory is too limited in Years 8 and 9. The subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development. Since the previous inspection results have improved and new teaching methods have been developed. Improvement has been good and the department has good capacity for further improvement.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good which leads to good achievement.
- Pupils respond to high expectations and this has resulted in rising examination successes at GCSE in recent years.
- The new leadership and management are good in identifying and developing areas for improvement.
- Students use ICT appropriately though access to facilities limits their progress in this area.
- The use of assessment data has yet to be fully developed.

Commentary

163. In 2004, the results at A* - C at GCSE are above the national average. Results at the higher grades of A*, A and B are above the national average. The results in history are higher than they are in other subjects and have been rising over the last five years.

164. Current pupils enter the school with varied historical skills but leave having made good progress. At the end of Year 9 pupils reach standards above those found nationally. Most students have a good knowledge and understanding of events over time. They are well adept at handling a range of source material and are aware of interpretation and bias. They can extract the information they need well and similarly discuss the issues that arise with their teachers and pairs. While higher attaining students can write well, they need the constant challenge of extended work to ensure that they continue to do so. Other ability levels make good progress in their writing and ability to discuss their work. Pupils extend their literacy skills well and use historical language similarly throughout the key stage.
165. Pupils were working at above the national average by the end of Year 11. Most pupils increase in confidence with the good use of the source material they are given, this helps them to gain a good understanding of developments overtime. Pupils of all ability levels write well and accurately and think about the issues before either writing or entering into a discussion.
166. Pupils' achievement at the end of Year 9 relative to prior attainment is good. Achievement at the end of Year 11 relative to standards at the end of Year 9 is also good. Their own personal qualities and the teaching they receive helps pupils achieve. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory rather than good progress which is slowed, on occasion, by a lack of additional classroom support.
167. The quality of teaching and learning are good as is teachers' subject knowledge. The lessons are well planned with learning objectives shared with pupils. The lessons draw on a range of activities and resources and developing number of teaching styles. The use of questioning is skilful, leading to extended answers by pupils which helps pupils to understand and reinforce their learning. The use of video helped to bring alive events pupils study, but the use of ICT is limited because of problems of access. Homework is set and occasionally used in lessons to give it value. While work is marked regularly, the short comments are not as helpful as they could be and the assessment information not held together makes it difficult to fully track pupil progress.
168. Subject leadership and management are good. The new head of department has the vision and direction to carry forward her team. Schemes of work are being reviewed, but the use of historical visits is limited only to two years. The accommodation is good and opportunities have been taken to celebrate good work. Monitoring is now in place and will have some effect. The subject has dealt with the issues in the last report reflected in a considerable improvement in GCSE examination results at GCSE.

Religious studies

The provision for religious studies is **good**.

	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Very good
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising and pupils achieve well in Years 7-9.
- The leadership is very good and has resulted in improved standards.
- The methods used to assess pupils are complicated and this information is not used effectively to involve pupils in their learning.
- The significant number of non-specialist teachers has an adverse effect on pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

169. GCSE results for 2004 show standards to be above average in the short course taken by all pupils. Standards are very much above average for the small number of pupils entered for the full GCSE course. Standards attained by pupils in Year 9 are above those expected nationally. On entry to the school, pupils' knowledge and understanding is in line with that expected. Standards have improved significantly at GCSE over the past three years.
170. Standards at Year 9, on evidence from the inspection, are above those expected. Pupils show an increasing understanding of Christianity and other world religions. They are becoming increasingly reflective about their own actions and those of others. In Year 11, pupils understand the different approaches, based on Biblical teaching, Christians have to reaching heaven. Pupils achieve well in Years 7-9. Achievement is only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 because of the large number of classes taken by non-specialist teaching staff. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well across Years 7-11, because of the effective emphasis on language development to support subject teaching.
171. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is better in Years 7-9 and in Years 10 and 11 where specialist teaching challenges pupils' ideas. The effective use of questioning by these teachers helps pupils to refine their thinking and so see issues in complex ideas. Pupils are encouraged to use their literacy skills effectively, and write letters stating particular viewpoints, as in the resignation of Zacchaeus as a Roman tax collector. However the lack of subject understanding in some non-specialist teaching means that some opportunities for using reading and writing skills effectively to enhance learning are lost. Where effective use is made of assessment pupils are able to judge what they have achieved and reflect upon how they can improve. However this approach is not used consistently by all teachers.
172. The leadership is very good. The head of department has vision, experience and understanding of how to improve pupils learning. This has resulted in the significant improvement in standards and the increased number of pupils continuing with the subject in the sixth form. The management is satisfactory. The deployment of a large number of non-specialist teachers, especially in Years 10 and 11, means that the department head has to concentrate on support for them. This means that there is less time for the effective monitoring of pupils learning. Consequently good initiatives introduced to support pupils learning - in assessment, literacy development and teaching strategies - are not fully used and developed by all teachers. The improvement since the last inspection is good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**

	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is successfully co-ordinated through very good leadership, management, and the effective organisation of the new accommodation. This is impacting favourably on standards.
- Attainment covers a wide range and is as national expectations at the end of Year 9. The whole Year 11 cohort is entered for the GCSE examinations. Standards are as the national average for girls.
- Good progress is made from low attainment in the subject on entry to the school, and pupils' achievement is good in both key stages.
- Teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory, and are predominantly good, with some very good teaching.
- The good practice in sixth form product design of linking projects with designers and design movements is underdeveloped across the department, considering the school's arts specialism.
- Although there has been good development in the use of ICT and computer aided design and manufacture since the last inspection, computer resources are still inadequate.

Commentary

173. The department offers a good range of courses in both key stages, including resistant materials, graphics products, electronics, food technology, textiles and child development. From low levels of design and technology skills in the subject on entry, pupils make good progress through the school, and achievement is good. By the end of Year 9, standards are in line with national expectation, and standards of designing and making in food technology, and textiles are above average. Standards in resistant materials and graphics are not so good, although, current work shows good progress in line with improvements in staffing provision. The overall GCSE design and technology results in 2004 were very similar to the national percentage for all girls. Predictions are for standards to rise significantly, when the subject becomes an option choice in the next year. Although the attainment range of pupils is quite wide, there is good evidence that all are working in line with their individual capabilities, and extending their knowledge understanding and skills appropriately. A satisfactory pass rate was gained in GCSE child development, representing good achievement.
174. Pupils follow the design process well when designing and making products. For example, Year 7 pupils worked safely and precisely when making soldered wire joints prior to making an electrical circuit for a night light. They listened carefully to instructions and overall their understanding and skills were above expectation. Year 8 pupils showed good understanding

of working practices and the gelatinisation of starch when conducting a rice cooking experiment. Year 9 pupils used hand and power tools safely and efficiently, cutting and shaping acrylic sheet to make a novelty clock face. Their designs were highly original and showed a good understanding of compositional balance, and use of complementary colours to give contrast. Good use was made of computer aided design and manufacturing machinery to cut precise shapes, including numerals for the clock face. Year 10 and 11 coursework folders show a wide variation in presentation skills in all areas of the subject, from arbitrarily placed text and headings with poorly drawn diagrams and design ideas, to very neat work, displaying strong individual corporate image and flair for graphical design. Content and productivity also cover a wide range. The best work shows clear understanding of the cyclical nature of the design process, knowledge of several different ways of presenting and communicating information, and appropriate design solutions critically evaluated.

175. Teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory, overall good, and there is some very good teaching. Teachers plan their work well, they have good command of their subject specialisms, and present appropriate challenges with enthusiasm. A purposeful, productive learning atmosphere is established in lessons. Lessons are made inclusive through open ended tasks. Teachers' very good command of the subject are evident in presentation, and in demonstrations. Question and answer sessions are used successfully to reinforce learning, gauge understanding and assess individual knowledge. Lesson content is appropriate to the age and attainment range of the class, and covers the technology curriculum well. The best lessons hold pupils' attention throughout and spark curiosity. Resources are well organised and time used efficiently. Appropriate homework is set. However, in some lessons improvements could be made to further learning of aesthetics and the design side of designing and making products. There were too few references to technologies past and present and to designers and design movements. There is insufficient pupil participation in some introductions, whole class discussions, and plenary sessions. In some lessons there is limited use of questioning, and in a small minority of lessons, not all pupils are fully engaged throughout the lesson. However, most pupils' attitudes and behaviour are almost always very good, and often excellent. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development through links to environmental issues.
176. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is clear vision of how the department needs to develop with a good emphasis on raising standards. Team spirit is developing well with the new staff. The courses, accommodation, and resources are well managed, and the curriculum is regularly reviewed and changes implemented. Development plans to link learning to design movements and to the study of related technologies, are appropriate to a specialist arts school. However, the further development of computer aided design and manufacture resources and applications are needed. Although teachers put good emphasis on health and safety procedures in lessons, there are some safety concerns regarding the new accommodation. The school has been notified of these. The department is making a major contribution to the development of the school's Intranet site, assisting learning through making subject information and worksheets available to pupils at all times. Improvements since the previous inspection are good, standards show an overall upward trend, the department is working more effectively in the single site accommodation, and good progress is being made in developing the curriculum through ICT applications.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

177. **Drama** was sampled during the inspection. It is organised as a separate specialist subject though some lessons are taught by non-specialist teachers in Years 7-9. Standards at GCSE are above the national average and reflect good pupil achievement.
178. The subject is taught to all pupils in Years 7 and 8 and pupils in the lower band in Year 9. Drama is a popular option in Key Stage 4. Drama is not offered in the sixth form. Standards demonstrated in two observed lessons were good overall.

179. Pupils are involved in assessment of their own work and are aware of their own strengths and where they need to make specific improvements. In a very good Year 10 lesson, pupils summed up their ideas and feelings at the end of sequence of lessons about the First World War. A number of drama techniques were used, including flashback and group sculpture, in an atmosphere of concentrated seriousness and appreciation of each other's work.
180. Resources for the subject are adequate and improving. In particular, current problems with poor acoustics in the drama room are being addressed. ICT is used well, as far as resources in the school allow.
181. Drama staff contribute well through a number of extra-curricular activities and links with outside partners. These links include visiting theatre-in-education groups and outside drama companies such as the National Youth Theatre.
182. Drama is an expanding area with proposals to extend course provision to the sixth form by introducing GCE A-Level in drama and theatre studies.

Art and design

Provision in art is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good leading to very good achievement.
- GCSE results are consistently very good reflecting the high expectations of the department.
- Very good student attitudes reflect the creative atmosphere and very positive teacher-pupil relationships.
- The leadership and management are very good in developing and promoting the subject as part of the school's provision as a Visual Arts College.
- Information and communication technology is not used enough and this limits use of media in those areas.

Commentary

183. The standard of work produced by students on entry to the school is in line with the national average. National Curriculum teacher assessments carried out in Year 9 show that standards are above the national average indicating good pupil progress and achievement.
184. At GCSE, the percentage of pupils who achieve a grade A*-C is well above the national average with all students achieving a pass grade. The percentage of students who achieve an A* is also above the national average. The results show that pupils of all abilities achieve very well and do better in art than they do in their other GCSE subjects.

185. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 confirm these good results. There is very clear improvement in standards from year to year. Pupils of all abilities develop a good grounding in the basic elements of art. They are particularly confident using paint and colour and standards of drawing are good. Research into the work of other artists is very thorough and pupils effectively incorporate new techniques into their own work.
186. Work seen by GCSE pupils is well above the national average and the achievement of students of all abilities from Years 10 to 11 is very good. Finished work has a wide range of subject content and technique reflecting high levels of personal expression and individuality. Standards of painting are particularly high but drawing standards at this age are in line with the national average. The quality of research into the work of famous artists is exemplary. A wide range of artists is studied in depth by most pupils, with new ideas and technique effectively woven into their own work.
187. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. No lessons were judged to be less than good with some excellent teaching seen in Year 11. There are clear teaching principles shared by all teachers, which strengthens the department and helps the sharing of good practice. Lessons are well structured; include a variety of activities with objectives clearly explained to pupils. All teachers have a very good subject knowledge and level of expertise and teach with authority, energy and enthusiasm. A combination of whole class teacher demonstration followed by individual support throughout lessons ensures that the achievement of all pupils, including those with special needs, is good.
188. Learning is helped by very thorough and regular assessment of work, which gives pupils both a clear understanding of their performance and sets clear individual targets for improvement. Lessons have a creative atmosphere as a result of teaching that is both friendly and challenging. Pupils respond well and maintain their interest and work rate throughout the double period lessons. Teaching also benefits from good technical support.
189. Leadership of the department is very good. The head of department provides strong leadership based on the pursuit of excellence. She has a clear view about how the subject should be taught and, as an excellent practitioner, leads by example. There is a strong work ethic within the department based on doing the very best for all pupils.
190. Management is also very good. The curriculum is constantly being developed to meet pupils' needs as well as fulfilling the requirements of the newly acquired Visual Arts College status. There is good teamwork and regular departmental meetings. The quality of teaching is regularly monitored and teachers benefit from regular in-service training. The department provides very good support for trainee teachers.
191. Regular art clubs and an open door policy allow pupils to continue their work outside of lessons. Pupils also benefit from working alongside practising artists. There are regular trips to the major art galleries and abroad. Work is well displayed around the school.
192. Classroom accommodation is very good but the department has limited storage areas. There is insufficient use made of information and communication technology for art making and too little three-dimensional work. There is also a need to further develop work related learning including giving older students more exposure to the professional art world.
193. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Teaching and assessment have improved and there is now a greater range of courses available. Accommodation has also improved but information and communication technology usage remains a problem.

Music

Provision in music is good.

	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Very good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching ensures that standards of attainment at GCSE are above the national expectation.
- Achievement is very good for pupils in Years 10-11 as a result of very good teaching.
- The department is well led which leads to high standards.
- Assessment is insufficiently developed to inform teachers' planning.
- Schemes of work are insufficiently detailed to provide effective guidance to teachers.

Commentary

194. GCSE results in 2004 were above the national average with four out of five pupils achieving the highest grades. These results are similar to those achieved in 2003 where nearly two out of three pupils gained the highest grades.
195. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above national averages. They are in line with national expectations for pupils in Years 7-9. For example, pupils in Year 7 are able to improvise a melody when given the notes from a pentatonic scale and those in Year 9 can compose a short variation when given a theme. They are able to perform independently and in pairs. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, standards of work are above national expectations. Pupils in Year 10 are able to use their prior knowledge to develop their understanding of new terms such as monophonic, homophonic and polyphonic. They compose with real imagination, as in a lesson devoted to film music.
196. Pupils' achievement is good overall. On entry to the school, pupils' achievement is in line with national expectations. By the end of Year 9, pupils have made satisfactory progress and this represents appropriate achievement. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Years 7-9 and achieve well. The department is beginning to make good use of assessment information to help pupils to make more progress, although at the time of the inspection, this is having a limited impact on achievement. By the end of Year 11, pupils have made very good progress and are achieving very well. This is because the teaching is very clearly planned with a focus on learning and where positive relationships are a key feature.
197. Teaching overall is good though it is very good in Years 10 and 11. When teachers have a good command of their subject and plan effectively, pupil learning is very good. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and this ensures that pupils make good progress. For example in a Year 10 lesson, pupils were introduced to music for films and then required to compose a piece in this particular style. The teacher used praise and encouragement effectively so that pupils were able to write complex pieces within a relatively short period of time.

198. Leadership by the head of department is good. There is a clear vision and a focus on raising pupil attainment. Management is satisfactory as self-evaluation and assessment to inform pupil learning are insufficiently well developed. Good improvement has taken place since the previous inspection with pupils making very good progress in Years 10 and 11 although the schemes of work need further development to help teachers in their planning, particularly for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The high number of pupils taking instrumental lessons at school is having positive impact on the wide-ranging extra-curricular music programme.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Improvement since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of very good teaching and planning.
- There is very good use of assessments to improve students’ learning.
- Well developed literacy skills and good use of subject terminology support learning.
- There is excellent extra-curricular provision for pupils in Years 7-11.
- Extra-curricular provision is insufficiently developed for post 16 students.

Commentary

199. Standards of pupils on entry to the school are average in gymnastics dance and ball skills. By the beginning of Year 8 standards observed in netball and trampolining are above average. Pupils in Year 7 have developed good passing and dodging skills in netball after only a few weeks of training. Pupils in Year 9 show average and above average skills in trampolining and hockey respectively. Pupils are encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities to extend the skills learned in school. One girl in Year 12 has represented Great Britain in fencing and another girl in Year 11 has represented Great Britain as a sprinter. A group of pupils represented the school in the Youth Games.

200. Overall pupil achievement is very good. Results in GCSE examinations compare favourably with those in previous years and are well above the national average for PE and are average for dance. All pupils take the Certificate of Achievement in PE and achievement is well above the national average for this course. Pupils’ achievement is good or very good in most lessons observed. Achievement in trampolining is a strength of the school. Pupils develop good analytical and observational skills because they are involved in assessment of their own performance. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as or sometimes better than girls in the same group.

201. Pupils in the sixth form who study AS level Sports Studies achieve well because of very good teaching and detailed and focused feed back. The option groups are small but pupils benefit from the tutorial like approach and receive valuable one to one support. Some of the pupils

assist with netball, football or swimming clubs for the younger girls and work in lessons as extra assistants thus improving their knowledge.

202. Overall the quality of teaching and learning are very good. Lessons ranged from satisfactory to excellent. Pupils can talk knowledgeably about their work using appropriate technical terms. One excellent trampolining lesson was seen where all pupils were fully involved in the tasks set. They were able to observe their partners working and identify areas for congratulation and areas for improvement and they did this well. Pupils in all year groups were observed working co-operatively and collaboratively together in pairs or groups supporting and advising each other as appropriate. In the best lesson, pupils were aware of their target levels and what to do to achieve them. Question and answer techniques were highly effective in involving them in their own learning. In lessons where teaching was satisfactory, pupils had less input and the lesson was over directed by the teacher.
203. The use of video in lessons is excellent for improving learning. Pupils in trampoline and dance lessons were observed identifying areas for improvement from a slow motion playback of their own performance.
204. The quality of leadership is excellent and the quality of management is very good. The curriculum is broad and inclusive. The head of department has high personal standards and works with her staff to develop their skills. She is well supported by the assistant head of department. Teaching assistants are well supported by the teaching staff and make a valuable contribution to the department. They have received some in school training and are able to help develop the skills of pupils with learning or physical difficulties.
205. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The school has maintained its high standards in Years 7-11 and improved the standards in Years 12 and 13. Resources have improved considerably with the provision of a sports hall and 'Astro turf' pitch. Assessment is now very well used to help pupils improve their own learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

The provision for citizenship is **good**.

	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The planned course is identified clearly and recognised as such by the pupils.
- Effective use is made of visiting speakers, and visits to enhance the provision.
- Most subjects have identified the contribution they make to the understanding of citizenship.
- Practical aspects of the taught subject are not always well developed, as in involvement with the school's council.
- The monitoring of teaching is under-developed and this does not support pupils' learning sufficiently.

Commentary

206. GCSE results for 2004, in the short course, were average for the higher attainers, but above average for all pupils. This was the first year that the subject was available for examination. The standards reached by pupils in Year 9 are in line with those expected. Evidence for the inspection indicates standards are close to those expected in Year 11 and Year 9. Achievement by pupils both by Year 9 and Year 11 is good. Pupils have settled well to this new course.
207. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. This is reflected in well planned lessons where teachers use their experience to challenges the pupils. In Year 8, pupils are involved in preparing guidance for the movement of people around the new school building. As part of this, they design and review posters and signage considering principles of design and the impact of those designs. In Year 10 pupils discuss the limitations of television programmes for children. Through skilful development of questioning by the teacher, pupils begin to see reasons for limiting access to various television experiences. However, some teaching lacks a sufficient pace and pupils do not develop their understanding of the more complex political implications involved in some current issues. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are actively involved in charity work within the community and take an active part in the local Youth Parliament. Pupils are also developing a more active role through their involvement with the school's council. However, the role and use of the council in supporting a more positive and practical experience of local democracy is under-developed. Effective use is made of visiting speakers from the community to enhance pupils' understanding of local issues. Subjects across the curriculum have indicated effectively their contribution to the subject.
208. The leadership of the subject is good. The new course has been well established in a short space of time and effective guidance is prepared for the teaching staff. The monitoring of teaching is under-developed and as a consequence best use is not always made of teaching time to sufficiently increase the understanding of pupils. The use of assessment data to inform and challenge pupils, and to set standards, is also under-developed.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE 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	13	100	98.8	38.5	53.6	76.9	89.5
Biology	6	100	97.0	50.0	42.6	90.0	81.3
Business studies	3	100	99.1	66.7	42.1	86.7	83.2
Chemistry	6	100	87.5	16.7	52.4	63.3	87.5
English	3	100	99.3	100	37.3	100	81.8
English literature	15	100	99.4	33.3	44.7	84.0	85.5
Design and technology	4	100	98.9	0.0	43.1	65.0	83.6
General studies	31	100	95.7	25.8	31.6	72.3	74.2
Geography	3	100	99.1	66.7	52.9	93.3	89.1
Health and social care	9	94.4	93.9	11.1	25.5	58.9	70.6
History	2	100	99.0	0.0	48.8	50.0	86.9
Information and communication technology	5	100	97.8	80.0	27.9	100	73.8
Mathematics	7	100	97.3	42.9	58.4	77.1	90.9
Media studies	9	100	99.4	22.2	44.1	73.3	85.4
Music	2	100	98.8	0.0	40.6	60.0	81.8
Psychology	13	100	97.8	15.4	45.7	67.7	83.7
Sociology	7	100	98.6	14.3	47.4	77.1	85.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English and English literature is **good**.

	Years 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are well qualified and their subject knowledge is sound. This leads pupils to attain above average standards and achieve well.
- Students work well together and learn well through discussion with their teachers.
- Teaching is too reliant on whole class discussion between teacher and students – often in the form of closed questions and answers. More structured, active tasks would help to embed students' knowledge and understanding.
- Students have a confident and positive attitude to their study and there is a warm working relationship between students and their teachers, which contributes to high standards and good achievement.

Commentary

209. In 2003, and again in 2004, results at AS-level were above the national average in both English language and English literature. Results at A-level in 2003 were above the national average in both English language and English literature. In 2004, results were above the national average in English language and broadly in line with the national average in English literature.
210. Standards observed in English and English literature are above average. Students show good knowledge and understanding of the subject. A Year 13 English language group responded well to revision work on language acquisition. A Year 12 English language group worked well on the recognition of simple, compound and complex sentences. Students' folders of work are full, containing notes and handouts from lessons, short written tasks and longer essays. Most students build up portfolios which reflect sustained effort and hard work and which will be essential for exam revision. Coursework assignments are often word-processed to a high standard.
211. Achievement in English and English literature in the sixth form is good. The profile of students who join the sixth form shows that they have reached standards that are broadly in line with national averages. Progress is good and A-Level results show above average achievement. However, although students' work is regularly marked, assessment rarely goes beyond ticks for relevant points included and a very short comment on the quality of the work. Points for development or suggestions for further study are rarely included. However, students are guided closely on the drafting and production of coursework assignments. Some of the best are stored as examples for students in subsequent years.
212. Teaching and learning in English and English literature are good. Teachers have good, sound subject knowledge and are able to articulate their knowledge clearly and coherently. A good Year 13 English literature lesson on *Othello*, analysing the language and character of Iago, reflected the teacher's insight into the character and knowledge of the text. Students contribute well to group discussion and respond confidently to questions posed by their teachers. They are willing and eager to learn. However, there is not enough active, varied and focused teaching. Teachers rely heavily on whole class discussion to explore ideas when it would sometimes be more appropriate for students to explore texts and ideas on their own, following structured activities planned by the teacher. Whole class discussion often defaults to the format of the teacher asking questions and the students answering them, with little wider or exploratory discussion among students and teacher. The Year 13 lesson on language acquisition fell into this category. An exception was a good Year 12 lesson on *Hard Times*. Students worked in groups to explore a structured series of questions, guided and supported by the teacher.
213. Leadership and management in English are satisfactory. The department team is cohesive, despite the recent changes needed to cover the continued provision of media studies teaching. Monitoring of the work of members of the department is not rigorous. The shared values and procedures, which lead to sustained improvement in English teaching are rarely evident.

214. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Arrangements for delivery of AS and A2 courses have been incorporated into the management of the department. Standards have been maintained and pupils still achieve above the national average and above the average for similar schools. As noted in the previous inspection report, students show good knowledge and understanding and English language students in particular collect and use a large quantity of background material.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

215. In 2004, there were no A-level candidates in French. Two students completed the AS course and standards achieved were above average. This year there are 10 students studying AS-level French. In one lesson, a group of very involved students demonstrated that they had made very good progress in the time since GCSE. Their progress was evident in the level of language understood and produced, the complexity of ideas expressed, and in the length and difficulty of the texts tackled. Very good teaching ensures that students learn very well and have lively opportunities to develop and hone very good linguistic skills.

MATHEMATICS

The inspection covered AS and A2 courses in mathematics.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Specialist teachers provide sound and accurate instruction and relationships with students are good.
- Participation by students in lesson discussion is patchy, and more involvement would enhance learning.
- Students' written work is detailed and their use of notation is generally of good standard.

Commentary

216. All seven students who took A2 level in 2004 gained grades A-E with three gaining grade B. Both in performance and in average points scores this was an improvement on 2003 when, though all eight candidates were successful only one obtained above a C grade. Standards remain below national averages. At AS-level, fewer than half the candidates secure grades A-E; just two out of five in 2003, whilst in 2004 though two students gained A grades five of the nine candidates were ungraded.

217. In the current Year 13 four students are pursuing studies for A2 level, undertaking modules in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. Evidence from modules already taken and from

the quality of work seen is that all should obtain grades up to the national average. Of the Year 12 class, a few have already discontinued and irregular attendance of some others is a concern. Most though are making good progress in the core pure mathematics and statistics modules. One Year 12 girl is on a fast-track course studying both mathematics and further mathematics and has already gained an excellent A grade in three modules taken. To undertake advanced mathematics students must have at least a B grade at GCSE. For those who complete the two-year A2 course achievement is good.

218. Teaching and learning are good. The very experienced specialist teachers are thorough in instruction, communicate their knowledge well, prepare and use resources effectively, and are aware of examination requirements. Students record sound notes and tackle questions effectively in class and beyond. Of five lessons observed, one was an excellent further mathematics lesson involving higher-level use of the binomial expansion, where the challenges posed were eagerly met. Year 13 students learned how to formulate vector equations of lines, proceeding then to deal well with associated questions. They were less confident in a mechanics lesson in devising the relevant force-acceleration diagrams and equations for problems involving connected particles, but could solve the equations once obtained. Year 12 students coped well with remainder theorem questions, and alertly followed a presentation by one of their number on the addition theorem for trigonometric expressions. In some lessons though there is insufficient active participation by students, a reluctance that restricts independent learning and inhibits progress.
219. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The number of students taking advanced mathematics is rising and helping to ensure more viable course provision. Progress since the last inspection is good and though student numbers have been small, overall standards have shown improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

220. The mathematical skills of the vast majority of students in the sixth form are more than adequate to support studies in other subjects. They use formulae effectively in physics and chemistry both in substitution of data or rearranging equations. In psychology and geography application of statistical methods is good, including use for instance of correlation techniques. There are good sustainability studies in design technology, determining effects of temperature change and global warming on the life-cycle of products.

SCIENCE

Physics

221. Only two students are currently studying physics. In 2004, the only candidate entered for AS-level failed to get a pass grade. At A-level the two candidates passed. Numbers are too small for national comparisons to be made. Good teaching in lessons resulted in average achievement. Standards were above average.

Biology

222. In 2004, the one candidate entered passed the AS-level examination. At A-level, of the twelve candidates entered, six passed the examination with above average attainment. Currently, 22 students are studying the subject. In the work and the lesson see, standards were below national expectations but student achievement was satisfactory.

Chemistry

The provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**

	Year 13
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not inspected

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to provide good teaching.
- Learning is enhanced through appropriate use of ICT resources.
- Assessment and marking do not give enough guidance to students on how to improve.
- Students' passive attitudes in class and an unwillingness to engage in their own learning processes restrict opportunities to improve their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

Commentary

223. Results in recent AS and A2-level examinations have been well below average but the small numbers of candidates makes national comparisons difficult. There is no discernible trend in recent years. Students' current observed standards in Year 12 are in line with expectations, but in Year 13 are just below expectations at this stage of the course.
224. The achievement of students taking the A-level course at this stage of the term is satisfactory, relative to their well-below average results at AS level in 2004. In Year 12, achievement is satisfactory in relation to GCSE results. In both years the achievement observed in lessons is good. In a lesson in Year 13, on identifying functional groups in organic compounds, it was apparent at the outset that some students could not tackle the problem from first principles, using their own knowledge. Once the mechanisms of reaction, using atomic models, was demonstrated by the teacher and understood, the students quickly moved to identification of the compounds. Students in both years do not yet show sufficient knowledge and understanding of some essential concepts and thus find application of them difficult in examination questions. Students are well motivated and work hard in researching and compiling notes but in lessons they rely too heavily on the teachers' instruction. They inquire too little and pose few questions, particularly in Year 12. Year 13 students are more confident.
225. Teaching and learning are good but teaching strategies do not fully encompass the range of learning needs. Too often the teaching is instructional. However, when a variety of techniques are used, including ICT and appropriate practical tasks, then learning is reinforced and progress is good. Planning is good and this enables teachers to reach their objectives in lessons. Teachers demonstrate their expertise in the subject by the detailed information and explanation given on each topic but the pace and challenge are not always adequate enough to promote firm understanding of concepts. Regular assessment, including marking and the checking of files, as a means of guiding students in the short-term is not used effectively enough in setting targets for improving.

226. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a degree of autonomy within the faculty of science. While the two teachers work closely together for curriculum and planning purposes effectively, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning strategies are not sufficiently rigorous. The assessment data-base is not yet effective enough for regular tracking and analysing of students' progress. The recent introduction of a half-termly review and report on each student should help to facilitate this better.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

227. There is a small number of students studying ICT in the sixth form. In 2004, all students passed AS and A-level examinations in ICT. The trend is towards improvement. In the lesson seen, Year 12 students were above average. The students found the work interesting and were aware of the relevance of ICT for their future careers. Overall, the good teaching and very good relationships ensure that students learn well and become skilled autonomous users of ICT.

HUMANITIES

Religious studies

228. In religious studies, AS results in 2004 were above average. This was the first year the subject was offered. Standards seen during the inspection are above average, again with a small number of students. Students achieve well because of the effective teaching which challenges and motivates them to engage and explore complex ideas. The course has attracted a significant increase in pupils in Year 12.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The most recent A-level results were above average and an improvement on results in recent years.
- Leadership is good and strong teamwork is helping to raise standards.
- Current students achieve well in relation to their performance at GCSE and AS-level.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and lessons have a clear structure to assist students make progress.
- Students are given many opportunities to develop research, presentation and independent learning skills.
- Relationships are very good and students have very good attitudes to learning.

Commentary

229. A-level results were above average in 2004 with a very small group of three students. In 2003 results were below average.
230. For current students, standards in Year 13 are below average, but the two students are achieving well in relation to their performance at AS-level. In Year 12, standards are above average and students are achieving well. Year 12 files show a good understanding of spatial variation in land use patterns in urban areas and in Year 13 a sound knowledge of the relationships between geology and landscape, particularly soils. In two good lessons in Year 13, they displayed good research skills which led to a clear understanding of economic growth issues in countries at different stages of development. Students in Year 12 have good presentational and independent enquiry skills. They use technical language and case studies well to illustrate their views. Many students use ICT effectively in their work.
231. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well, with a good range of methods and resources. They give good quality explanations and ask challenging questions. There is often very good interaction in lessons between students and teachers. This was seen for example, in a very good lesson on the atmospheric components in the hydrological cycle. They provide valuable constructive feedback orally and in writing to assist students improve the quality of their work. Relationships are extremely constructive and students have very good attitudes to learning. They are attentive and work well, both independently and collaboratively.
232. Leadership and management are good, with strong teamwork. The curriculum is good and is enhanced by good quality residential fieldwork in Year 12. Teachers' expertise is very well matched to the curriculum. Subject planning is good and departmental work is effectively monitored. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. With its good leadership and committed staff the department has good capacity for further improvement.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good quality of teaching, which is based on high levels of organisation, very good subject expertise and very effective planning.
- The very good quality of learning, which results in good achievement.
- The very good quality of assessment, which gives students clear information for the improvement of their performance.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Commentary

233. In 2004, results at AS-level for a group of six students were in line with the national average, but these students did not continue to A-level this year. In 2004, two students attained results at A-level that were below national expectations.
234. In the work seen in Year 12 with four students, and in Year 13 with one student, standards are above national expectations. Students are achieving well in terms of their prior attainment. Encouraged by their teachers, students learn to think creatively and to consider different analytical approaches and historical interpretations. Written work demonstrates the growing ability of all students to challenge the assumptions implied in a question, and to select and use knowledge relevantly and effectively. Those at the top end of the range show high levels of synthetic understanding and the ability to reach well developed historical judgments. Adopting a critical approach, students can produce convincing arguments and reach coherent conclusions. They are conscientious and highly focused. Overall, students are becoming confident, independent learners and as such will be well prepared for university education.
235. Teaching in the sixth form is never less than very good. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and show very good variety. Teachers' strong subject expertise enables them to introduce topics clearly, and to make very effective use of a range of evidence. Using skilful questioning techniques, teachers heighten the appreciation of different factors in historical causation. Planning is excellent. Lessons are well designed to extend historical enquiry and to develop conceptual understanding. The good relationship of staff and students contributes to an atmosphere that is both constructive and very secure.
236. The subject leadership and management of a new head of department are very good. Excellent knowledge of the courses and a very good understanding of the way students learn colours the work of the department. Teachers have high expectations. Their commitment is mirrored in the regular assessment of written work that is set regularly, and in the very good quality of diagnostic feedback, which provides students with detailed indicators for the improvement of their performance. There is good rehearsal of examination criteria and techniques, with students actively involved in assessment. As in the school as a whole, formal target setting is in the early stages of development. The department is well resourced and encourages the use of the internet for research. Overall, the subject deserves to have wider take-up at A-level.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not inspected

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained at both A and AS-level were below average in 2004.
- Students experience a narrow range of teaching strategies. Insufficient emphasis is placed on students working collaboratively and presenting findings from their group or independent research.

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- The attitudes of students are very good, as are their relationships with their teachers.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory. Whilst good information is provided on examination requirements, students receive little regular, individual feedback on how to improve their work.

Commentary

237. Psychology is an increasingly popular subject, which attracts large numbers of students, particularly at AS-level. Attainment has varied widely over recent years, but was below average at both AS and A-level in 2004. At A-level, whilst all passed, the proportion attaining the highest grades, A or B, was well below average. At AS-level, the proportion attaining high grades was also well below average, but with nearly 30 per cent failing to attain any grade.
238. Standards seen during the inspection were broadly average overall, but with a few students in Year 13 displaying well above average understanding of psychological theories. In Year 12, for example, many can explain what is meant by a 'secure attachment', and most can cite some appropriate research. However, when more searching questions are asked, others display very muddled thinking. In Year 13, students have a secure understanding of how to record important research studies, but whilst some recall research well, others are unresponsive to questioning. Given students' prior attainment at GCSE, overall, achievement is satisfactory. However, unsatisfactory use is made of target and predicted grades. For example, some students with high GCSE performance do not have high, predicted grades, whilst others are insufficiently aware of their expected grades. The first module at AS-level is used almost as a 'mock' examination, with a significant proportion re-sitting the module in the summer.
239. The quality of teaching and learning is generally satisfactory, with some good features. The attitudes of students are very good, as are their relationships with their teachers. Teaching, this year, is shared between two teachers, whose styles complement each other. Both have very good subject expertise and good understanding of examination requirements. With both, lessons generally follow a similar pattern of whole class discussion, questioning and teacher exposition, although some lessons are more structured in providing notes and a greater variety of activity. However, overall, too much is done for students, resulting in many remaining passive for much of the lesson. The pace of some lessons is too slow and too anecdotal: these lessons lack rigour. Whilst students are encouraged to carry out research as homework, not all use the Internet effectively to do so. Within lessons, there is a limited amount of paired and group work. However, in general, insufficient emphasis is placed on students working collaboratively and presenting findings from their group, or independent, research. Thus the skills needed to develop understanding at A-level, which will enable students to attain higher grades, are not practised sufficiently.
240. The quality of assessment is unsatisfactory, particularly in Year 12. Whilst good information is provided on examination requirements, students receive little regular, individual feedback on how to improve their work. Whilst generic feedback is provided to the class on how to improve, it does not focus on the needs of individuals sufficiently. Whilst performance on one module in Year 12 has been identified as being less good for many students, strategies to address this have yet to be developed.
241. Leadership and management of the subject are sound. However, both teachers have other responsibilities within the school. The growth in popularity of the subject has resulted in large option groups in Year 12. To overcome this, some students are taught in a group after school. There is a small subject base. It is too small for larger classes to carry out group work effectively and there is limited display in the room: it does not provide a stimulating learning environment.

Sociology

The provision for sociology is **good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well, obtaining grades that are above the national average.
- Committed teachers create a positive learning environment that provides good feedback and encouragement to students. They use their good knowledge of the subject to raise standards.
- The subject leadership is very good.

Commentary

242. In 2004, AS results were well above the national expectations. The A-level results were below the national standards, but small numbers make this comparison unreliable. Comparing the students' results with those obtained in their previous examinations reveals that they achieved well. Results over the past few years have been steadily improving.
243. Standards of work seen in the Year 12 AS groups varied considerably. In the higher attaining group, standards are well above the national average. Students have a good understanding of important theories and concepts and are able to use specialised language well. They have good research skills showing good use of ICT. Literacy levels are very good with essays demonstrating clear evaluative skills. This group is achieving well and they are on target to attain A – C grades, which is well above the grades predicted on the basis of their previous examination results. In the lower attaining group standards are below the national average. Students are less confident and do not produce work of the same high standard. The school policy of allowing all students to start the course is reflected in their work, with some students having difficulty with the academic nature of the course. For a number of these students, absence plays a significant part in their underachieving. Their written work lacks depth and continuity. They are on target to obtain lower grades.
244. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to plan lessons that challenge students to reach high standards. They use a wide range of teaching strategies to interest and motivate students and to create a supportive learning environment. Students are encouraged to develop their own independent learning skills but this is not always evident in the oral work that is done in the classroom, where teachers tend to dominate the discussions. This is especially noticeable in the lower attaining group. Assignments are well marked with formative comments.
245. Although the subject leader carries a very heavy workload, the leadership is very good. There is a very strong team spirit with a clear vision for the subject. A recent self-evaluation exercise has identified clear targets for the future. The subject was briefly mentioned in the last inspection since when good progress as been made.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

246. A small number of students take product design and textiles at AS and A-level. All students gain passes but few achieve the higher grades. There are too few students to make meaningful comparisons with national standards. Courses are well planned and presented, with excellent use of a variety of ICT applications. In a Year 12 lesson seen on rendering technical illustration, achievement was very good and students' work was above average. Very good teaching and challenging tasks ensured that students' learning was well consolidated.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Media studies

247. The AS and A-level media studies courses are currently jointly taught by members of the English and drama departments. They are popular courses and attainment at A-level in 2003 was above the national average; that in 2004 was below the national average. At AS-level, attainment was above the national average in 2003, and again in 2004. A good lesson was observed, in Year 12. The students were preparing for their AS exam and showed a very sound grasp of the subject being able to discuss an "unseen" media text with knowledge, enthusiasm and confidence. The course suits the school's intake and is very involving. There is a plan to introduce BTEC media studies, which would require substantial further investment in equipment.

Music

248. All students passed A-level music in 2003 and 2004, although overall standards were slightly below national expectations. In the lesson seen, students were achieving well and standards were above the national average. Good teaching ensured that students learned well and developed their skills and understanding when completing a stylistic analysis of a late romantic piece of music.

Art and design

Provision in art is **very good**.

	Years 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and results in very good student achievement.
- The working relationship between teachers and students is excellent and enhances learning.

- There are a wide variety of courses available that meets different student interests.
- The subject is making a significant contribution to the personal development and self-esteem of students.

Commentary

249. In the AS examination, the percentage of students achieving a grade A-B is above the national average. At A2 level the figure is below the national average. However there is a 100 per cent pass rate at A2 and the average points score measured across all grades puts the results more in line with the national average.
250. Standards of work seen on all advanced courses, including photography, are above the national average, which suggests standards are improving. Work is confident with very strong textural qualities often exploring media boundaries, for example, between paint, textiles, natural material and photographic imagery. Work has high levels of personal expression and a rich and mature use of colour. Students can carry out detailed investigations and research into the work of famous artists and sketchbook use is very good. However not many students develop ideas into three dimensions. Students are able to talk with confidence about their work but are reluctant to use a specialist art vocabulary in class discussion.
251. The quality of teaching and learning are very good. Lessons have clear aims and students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own progress and learning. Regular whole class group tutorials and discussions are excellent. They are very well led involving excellent facilitation skills underpinned by a very good subject knowledge.
252. Teachers have very high expectations and constantly challenge students to give greater effort. The use of regular and appropriate positive feedback raises student self-esteem and promotes self-confidence. Students work to their potential and clearly enjoy the relaxed but creative environment often continuing their work outside of lesson time.
253. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department sets high standards and is ambitious for the subject and students. She has played a key role in the schools' recent achievement of specialist visual arts status. She is aware of the areas of provision that need improving. For example, students' performance in different areas of the syllabus are analysed and steps taken to improve delivery in these areas. The curriculum is constantly developing and now includes an appropriate vocational option and a successful photography course at advanced level. Monitoring and assessment of students work is regular and is built into the learning process using group and individual tutorials.
254. There are regularly trips to art galleries and an annual art trip abroad. Students are currently involved in an innovative portraiture project involving working with key figures from within the school and local community.
255. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. There are now more courses available and although classroom accommodation has improved Year 12 and 13 students lack a dedicated work area.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Sports studies

256. AS-level results in 2004 were in line with the national averages, however, the cohort was so small that no realistic judgements can be made in relation to national standards. In the Year 13 theory lesson sampled, good progress was made and girls showed good achievement over time. All students were interpreting the syllabus appropriately, essays were well constructed and feedback was given both orally and in written form. In a Year 12 theory lesson sampled, students were discussing the challenges of introducing sports to emergent societies. Girls were challenged to explain new terms such as "social mobility" and to think about how the infrastructure of the country might affect the sports used for competition. Good cross-

curricular links with geography were made throughout. The teachers' own knowledge of introducing football to parts of Kenya supported student learning. Achievement was very good because of the pace of the lesson, the teacher's sound subject knowledge and the attitude of the students.

BUSINESS

Economics

257. In 2004, three students attained standards that were above average in the A-level examinations. In the one lesson seen, teaching and learning were good and students achieved well. Attitudes to learning are good, which combined with good teaching results in good progress being made.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The provision for health and social care is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not inspected

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department provides a supportive learning environment that enables students taking the intermediate GNVQ course to achieve well.
- Good use is made of local care providers to provide work experience that supports the classroom provision.
- Lessons for students who are taking the AVCE courses lack pace and challenge.

Commentary

258. Although both the AVCE results and the Intermediate GNVQ results were well below the national average, small groups mean that such comparisons are unreliable and do not truly reflect the students' achievements. Students taking the AVCE course achieve very well. There are no school records that clearly show students achievement against previous examination results for those taking the Intermediate GNVQ course but careful examination of the students' records show that they have achieved well especially in terms of personal and emotional development. Most students have gone on to careers in the caring professions and at least two are taking degrees in health related subjects.

259. Standards of work seen in the current Intermediate group are well below national expectations with most students reaching at best a pass grade. They have a limited understanding of such things as child development and found it difficult to apply this knowledge to the children they had observed during their practical work experience. Their understanding of the importance of communication skills in the care situation is better. For some students, absence plays a significant role in determining their progress, and for these students achievement is unsatisfactory. For the rest achievement is satisfactory.

260. The school policy of accepting all students for the course is reflected in the standards of work seen in the current AVCE group, which varies considerably. Some students produce work that is likely to reach at least a B grade, but others are working at the D/E grades. Most students are achieving well and are on target to achieve grades that are above those predicted.
261. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. Relationships are very good, with considerable emphasis being placed on creating a supportive learning environment that seeks to encourage both intellectual and personal development. Small groups mean that lessons tend to follow a similar tutorial pattern with a limited range of teaching methods that bring pace and challenge to the lessons. This is especially so for the higher attainers who are taking the AVCE course. Students are encouraged to develop their own independent learning skills but are not always given the necessary supportive structure that will enable them to make good progress. Teachers often assume that students understand the concept and language being used without ensuring that students have fully grasped the meaning. Students' work is well marked with formative comments.
262. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The day-to-day leadership of the subject is satisfactory but a feeling of insecurity about future developments permeates the department with the result that there is no forward planning or focused staff development. Pupils' progress is well monitored. Good use is made of local care providers to provide students with suitable work placements. Although mentioned in the last inspection, the subject was not fully reported on so it is not possible to judge improvements since the last inspection.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

Citizenship

263. In citizenship, results of AS examinations in 2004 were close to the national average, and above at the higher grades for social studies. This was the first year of entry. The course is now compulsory for all students in Year 12. Evidence from the inspection shows standards match previous examination results. Students gain confidence in speaking to a group and by pooling their ideas to agree a group presentation about advertising to specific groups of people. There is a current staff vacancy for the co-ordination of this subject in the sixth form.

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

The effectiveness of management	5	3
---------------------------------	---	---

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