

INSPECTION REPORT

TUNBRIDGE WELLS GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Tunbridge Wells

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118790

Headteacher: Mr Derek Barnard

Lead inspector: Mr Anthony Shield

Dates of inspection: 24 – 27 January 2005

Inspection number: 268998

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Boys
Number on roll:	1180
School address:	St John's Road Tunbridge Wells Kent
Postcode:	TN4 9XB
Telephone number:	01892 529551
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Reidy
Date of previous inspection:	April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Tunbridge Wells Boys' Grammar School is a grammar school for boys aged 11–18, situated in Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Pupils are drawn from the town and surrounding villages, and many come from socially and economically advantaged homes; the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. There are 1,180 pupils on roll, with 250 in the sixth form. Attainment on entry is well above the national average, although the ability range is wider than in many other grammar schools. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is well below average, with 15 pupils having identified special educational needs; this represents less than one per cent of the school roll. One pupil has a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The majority of pupils are of white UK heritage, and there are small numbers of pupils from other ethnic minority backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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18638	Christopher Shaw	Team Inspector	Information and communication technology
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15576	David Nebesnuick	Team Inspector	Geography and business studies
22458	Gilbert McGinn	Team Inspector	History
31690	Bridget Smith	Team Inspector	French and German
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good school** with a number of very good features; it provides good value for money. The school is led with confidence and authority by the headteacher and senior staff. Standards are well above average, and pupils' achievements are good as a result of good and often very good teaching.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The principled and very good leadership of the headteacher inspires the respect of the whole school community and ensures a strong sense of common purpose.
- Teaching is characterised by high expectations and high levels of challenge.
- Most pupils achieve well and particularly so in mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography and music, where achievement is very good.
- A very small number of pupils underachieve, particularly in business studies.
- There is a lack of continuity in the planning and support for pupils with identified needs who are likely to underachieve and who need help in organising their learning.
- Pupils' personal development is very good and most develop into mature young people; they thrive in the very good opportunities for extra-curricular activities and taking responsibility.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not consistent enough to ensure self-evaluation is embedded at all levels and good practice is shared more widely.
- Pupils' very good behaviour and their very positive attitudes to work make a strong contribution to their achievement.
- The school's partnership with parents makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
- The accommodation is inadequate in spite of recent improvements.

Overall, the school has made good improvements since the last inspection in 1999. Standards in Year 9 tests and in GCSE examinations have all been maintained at well above average levels and A-level results have improved significantly. Most key issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been tackled, although the consistent monitoring of teaching remains an issue and despite some improvements to the accommodation, this is still inadequate.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good overall, given the students' attainment on entry in Year 7. Although the similar schools grade above suggests that pupils' performance is well below average compared with schools whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9, inspectors found very little evidence of underachievement except for a very small number of pupils in

business studies and religious education in Years 10 and 11. This has a disproportionate affect on the school's overall GCSE results. The school accepts pupils with a wider spread of ability than is usual in grammar schools, and consequently similar schools comparators are not entirely valid. However the value added measure for pupils' progress between Year 7 and Year 11 is above average and reflects the good overall progress made by most pupils throughout Years 7-11.

Standards in Years 9, 11 and the sixth form are well above average overall. Pupils' achievements are good in English and very good in mathematics and science in both Years 9 and 11. In other subjects, again in both Years 9 and 11, students' achievements are very good in design and technology, history, geography and music, and good in all other subjects except for religious education where they are satisfactory, and business studies where they are unsatisfactory.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good overall. Most pupils take their work seriously and are keen to do well. Their very positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their achievements. Behaviour is very good and pupils are considerate of others, behaving with increasing maturity as they move through the school. Attendance is well above average, marred only by the incidence of holidays taken during term time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **quality of education** provided by the school is **good. Teaching is good** overall, and much is very good or excellent. Teachers have high expectations and are very confident in their subject knowledge and ability to explain difficult concepts with clarity. As a result, learning is at least good in most lessons. Assessment is satisfactory overall. While some very good practice exists, assessment is not being used consistently well and this partly explains why the achievement of some pupils with mild learning difficulties is satisfactory rather than good. The curriculum has good breadth and balance and is enriched by a very extensive range of extra-curricular activities. While resources are good, the accommodation, despite recent improvements to English and mathematics, remains overcrowded and in a poor state of repair. The school's procedures for the care and welfare of pupils are very good; guidance and support of pupils are good overall, though support for pupils with identified needs is not consistent. Relationships amongst the whole school community are very good. Very strong support from parents makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The very good leadership of the headteacher inspires others, and has established an ethos of high expectations and care for the achievement of all pupils. He is well supported by his senior team and managers at all levels. The work of the governors is very good, and they provide expert and valuable support for the school's work. The school organisation is efficient and effective, but procedures for the monitoring and self-evaluation of its work are not consistently applied. Although statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship, religious education in the sixth form, and to assess and report on pupils' progress in ICT in Years 10 and 11 are not fully met, governors have done all they can and standards are not being adversely affected.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school's partnership with its parents is very good. Parents are very supportive and the school has their confidence. In particular they are pleased that their children make good progress as a result of good teaching and that pupils are expected to work hard. They think the school is led and managed well, and are kept well informed about progress. Pupils also express considerable support for the school. They enjoy the challenge of the teaching and appreciate the helpfulness of the teachers.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the achievement of pupils in business studies.
- Provide more sustained support for pupils with identified needs and who are likely to underachieve.
- Tighten the procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Continue to improve the accommodation.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Review the arrangements made for providing a daily act of collective worship, religious education in the sixth form and the assessment and reporting on progress of pupils in Years 10 and 11 not following an examination course in ICT.

THE SIXTH FORM AT TUNBRIDGE WELL BOYS GRAMMAR SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is providing a **good** education for its students, and there have been significant improvements in standards since the last inspection in 1999. Standards in 2004 were well above average overall. Inspectors' observations of work in the current Year 13 indicates well above average standards in a good proportion of subjects inspected. Given their prior attainment at GCSE, students' achievements are good as a result of good teaching. Sixth form standards and particularly the added value provided by the school have improved significantly in recent years. Leadership and management are good, and the sixth form is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well as a result of good and sometimes inspirational teaching and the close monitoring of their progress.
- Students enjoy being part of the sixth form and are mostly very supportive.
- Students are good role models for younger pupils and enjoy taking responsibility when given the opportunity.
- Teaching is effective in allowing students to develop independent learning and research skills.
- A good range of subjects is offered as a result of collaborative arrangements with neighbouring schools.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	English – Very good. Standards are well above average and students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching by an experienced team. French – Satisfactory. Students in Year 13 are achieving as they should be given their prior attainment; however numbers are too small for national comparisons. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory.
Mathematics	Very good. Standards are well above average, and improving. Students respond well to their teachers' high expectations.
Science	Biology – Good. Good teaching caters for the needs of all students and they achieve well.
Engineering, design and manufacturing	Design and Technology – Very good. Standards are well above average and teaching is consistently of a very good quality. As a result students' achievements are very good.
Information and communication technology	Computing - Satisfactory. Standards are average. Teachers employ a high level of expertise and provide students with good individual advice during lessons. However, assessment is not used effectively enough to support learning.
Humanities	History – Very good. Well above average standards are promoted by very effective teaching. Students' achievements are very good through the course. Sociology – Very good. Standards are well above average, and achievement is very good. Teachers use their excellent knowledge of the subject to plan lessons that challenge and motivate students.

Visual and performing arts and media	Music – Good. Teaching and learning are very good. Standards in both music and music technology are in line with course requirements but show an improving trend. The achievement of students is good.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Sports Studies – Good. Results are consistently above average and students achieve well. Teaching is very good.
Business	Business Studies – Satisfactory. Standards are average, teaching is satisfactory, although pace and challenge in some lessons are insufficient because of inadequate planning. Coursework is managed effectively and achievement is satisfactory.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The quality of personal support and guidance that students receive is very good. Students feel well supported and have access to very good careers and higher education advice. Tutors know their students very well and are responsive to their needs.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Standards have been improving and the school maintains a sharp focus on performance in public examinations, alongside a commitment to the students' personal development. Management is informed by good use of performance data. Governors are very well informed of sixth form specific issues.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy being part of the sixth form. They consider the teaching challenging and demanding and particularly appreciate the helpfulness of the teachers and the encouragement they receive to study independently. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, students indicate that they are less confident that the school values and responds to their views.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards of work seen overall during the inspection are well above average in Years 9, 11 and 13. Pupils' achievements are good throughout the school. Well above average standards have been maintained in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations since the last inspection. Standards at A-level have improved significantly since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are good throughout the school.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography and music.
- Achievement in business studies is unsatisfactory.
- A very small number of lower attaining pupils underachieve at GCSE.

Commentary

1. Attainment on entry to the school in Year 7, as measured by the pupils' standards in national tests taken at the end of their primary schools, is well above average. The school selects its pupils through the Kent Selection Test at age 11 years, but the spread of ability is wider than is found in many grammar schools. This is confirmed by cognitive ability tests taken by pupils at the school in Year 7, which show an average score lower than neighbouring grammar schools and a small number of pupils with scores that are below average. In addition, verbal scores are lower than quantitative and non-verbal scores, and a small number of boys have below average literacy scores on entry.
2. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the latest year for which national comparisons are available, the pupils' performance in English was well above average, and in mathematics and science it was very high and in the top five per cent of schools nationally. English results are not as high as either mathematics or science, reflecting the lower literacy standards on entry. Results improved in each subject in 2004, and the overall trend has been improving in line with the national trend.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	42.1 (39.0)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	46.2 (45.7)	n/a (35.4)
science	42.7 (41.7)	n/a (33.6)

There were 178 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades in 2004 was 95 per cent, well above the national average but well below the average for grammar schools and "similar schools", that is schools whose pupils performed

similarly in national Year 9 tests in 2002. Inspectors found no widespread underachievement although progress through Years 10 and 11 is less marked for a very small number of boys in business studies and religious education. This has a disproportionate impact on the overall results. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to G grades and the average total points score per pupil were also well above average.

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	95 (95)	53 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98 (98)	89 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	97 (96)
Average point score per pupil	57.8 (56.7)	41.4 (40.6)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	48.8 (47.7)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 174 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Most pupils taking GCSE in 2004 achieved well, and performance data that measures the added value from entry in Year 7 to GCSE performance in Year 11 is above average, confirming the overall good achievement of pupils through Years 7-11. In some subjects boys performed particularly well, and a high proportion of A and A* grades were achieved in design and technology, geography, history, ICT, mathematics and science, reflecting the good achievement of able pupils and those identified as gifted and talented. Less able boys tended to do less well in business studies, religious education and English.
5. The ambitious GCSE targets set for 2004 were not met. Targets set for 2005 are more realistic and indicate that high standards will be maintained. Inspectors judge these targets to be both realistic and challenging.
6. Overall in work seen during the inspection in Years 9 and 11, standards were above average in line with recent tests at the end of Year 9 and with recent GCSE results. Most pupils' achievements are good given their prior attainment on entry, and good progress is made through the school.
7. There are relatively few pupils identified with special educational needs, although the school does also have an additional group of pupils with identified needs (PIN). The achievement of these pupils is satisfactory. Those who are identified as needing additional support with specific literacy difficulties and study skills achieve very well when they are taught individually or in small groups. However, their progress over time is only satisfactory because the support is not sufficiently frequent or consistent. The school has also identified several pupils who have experienced mild learning difficulties in earlier years. These pupils still need help in organising their learning. Teachers are usually aware of their individual needs but in many lessons they do not take these into account in their planning. As a result, although these pupils make satisfactory progress overall, they do not achieve as well as other pupils.
8. The school has small numbers of pupils from backgrounds other than white British. Inspectors found no significant evidence of different progress made by pupils from

different ethnic heritages, although the very few pupils with English as an additional language are not given consistent support.

9. In work seen in English during the inspection, standards were well above average in Years 9 and 11. Given their attainment on entry, pupils' achievements are good overall, though better in Years 7-9 than in Years 10 and 11. Standards of literacy are well above average throughout the school, and a major factor in the good achievement across a number of subjects. Most pupils speak confidently and fluently, and they write accurately using a good range of vocabulary. Standards in mathematics are very high throughout the school and pupils' achievements are very good. Most pupils confidently tackle calculations, use mathematical formulae with assurance and draw and interpret graphs accurately. Standards in science are also very high in Years 9 and 11. Pupils' achievements are very good. Pupils have a very secure grasp of scientific principles and confidently apply them in a range of contexts.
10. In other subjects, standards in work seen in history in Year 9 are very high and pupils' achievements very good. In all other subjects in both Years 9 and 11 standards are well above average except in physical education, religious education and citizenship, where they are above average, and business studies in Year 11, where they are average. Most pupils' achievements are good or very good in all subjects throughout the school, although they are only satisfactory in religious education (in Year 11). Achievement in citizenship could not be judged; in business studies, however, it is unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

11. In 2004 the results of students entered for AS and A-level examinations were well above average. The average points score of candidates entered was 357.7 compared with the national average of 265.2. In work seen during the inspection, overall standards were also well above average, and students' achievements are good, given their standards on entry to the sixth form.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.0 (96.9)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	43.6 (38.0)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per student	357.8 (353.6)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 105 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

12. At A2 level in 2004 there were some good results in sociology (72 per cent of candidates achieving an A or B grade), in English literature (69 per cent), English language (67 per cent), geography (61 per cent), mathematics (57 per cent), history and design and technology (53 per cent) and physics (52 per cent).
13. Value added measures in most subjects indicate that students achieve well given the GCSE grades on entry to the sixth form. Almost all Year 11 students stay on into the sixth form, although a few leave to pursue courses elsewhere. As a result, attainment on entry is above average. Standards in the sixth form have improved significantly since the last inspection report in 1999, when results were below average overall. Standards are improving as a consequence of increasingly good teaching that offers good levels of challenge, and a strong focus on developing independent study skills.

14. Not all subjects were inspected in detail during the inspection. Of those that were, standards observed in English, mathematics, design and technology, history and sociology were well above average for this stage in the course. Standards in biology, French, music and physical education were above average, and in information technology and business studies they were average. Given their attainment at GCSE, students achieve very well in English, mathematics, design and technology, history, and sociology, and well in biology, music and physical education. In information technology, French and business studies their achievement is satisfactory.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitudes and behaviour of the majority of pupils and students are very good. Relationships in school between pupils and with members of staff are very good. Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development are very well promoted. Levels of attendance and punctuality are very good. The mature attitudes, behaviour and personal qualities of the sixth form students have a significant impact on their levels of achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils enable them to achieve well because they are highly motivated and eager to learn.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good and create a positive learning environment.
- The provision for pupils' social, moral and cultural development is very good and contributes significantly to their well-rounded development.
- Pupils' personal development is very good and most develop into mature young people; they thrive in the very good opportunities for extra-curricular activities and taking responsibility.
- Statutory requirements for the daily act of collective are not fully met.
- Students in the sixth form demonstrate very mature attitudes in their work and behaviour.

Commentary

15. Most pupils demonstrate very mature attitudes to school and their learning. They are highly motivated, work hard, listen attentively and respond well. This has a positive impact on pupils' level of achievement. In the very small minority of lessons where teaching is undemanding or dull, some pupils lose concentration and become passive or bored.
16. Pupils' very good attitudes are reflected in the well above average attendance figures. Pupils are generally happy to come to school and eager to learn. Attendance levels have dropped slightly over the last two years, largely because of an increasing number of parents taking holidays in term time, despite the robust discouragement from the school. Heads of year, form tutors and office staff monitor pupils' attendance effectively.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.9	School data	0.1
National data	7.0	National data	1.1

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

17. Pupils with special educational needs respond very positively to the very good support that they receive from a specialist literacy teacher and learning support assistant. They willingly attend extra lessons to help with literacy, study skills and touch typing before and after the school day. However, most of these students only receive extra support in Year 7. The school has recognised that some of these students lose interest and motivation in Years 10 and 11, when support is no longer available.
18. Standards of behaviour are very good. Pupils demonstrate a thoughtful concern for others in classrooms and in the narrow corridors and staircases. They behave with increasing maturity as they move through the school. Although over half the pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that there was evidence of bullying, pupils indicated to inspectors that the school takes a strong line on bullying and oppressive behaviour and when incidents do occur they are dealt with promptly and effectively.

19. Whilst the number of fixed term exclusions has increased since the last inspection, the number of pupils excluded is low in comparison to other schools, and few pupils re-offend.

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	1095	33	0
White – Irish	4	1	0
White – any other White background	21	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	7	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	5	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British - African	2	0	0
Chinese	16	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
Parent / pupil preferred not to say	9	0	0

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

20. The overall provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good. This is reflected in the very good personal development of pupils in the school. Although there is no daily act of collective worship for all pupils, spiritual awareness has improved since the last inspection. Pupils have a good self-awareness and are encouraged to reflect on the meaning and purpose of life in some lessons. They have a respect for the beliefs of others and develop insights into other people's values. Moral development is very good. Pupils are well aware of right and wrong, have a very clear knowledge of what is expected of them and respond very well. Lessons often test their powers of reasoning as they debate ethical issues. Pupils' knowledge and awareness are reflected in their actions: expressing concern for others in their community, or for those less fortunate than themselves. This is demonstrated in regular fund-raising events for charities, including significant amounts raised for the recent tsunami disaster appeal.
21. Pupils work well together and many opportunities are provided for them to express their views in pairs or group work and general discussion. Pupils are self-confident and are developing well as responsible members of the community. A number have been trained as peer mentors in the 'Fusion' group; others run the 'Fair Trade' stall, are prefects, act as year representatives on the school council or help coach younger boys. Social and cultural opportunities are many and varied and include a large number of clubs, sporting fixtures, plays, concerts and productions and opportunities for overseas visits. Overseas sports and music tours and links with their partner school in India are helping to raise pupils' awareness of different cultures. However, the school does less to prepare pupils for living in the multi-faith and culturally diverse society which is Britain today.

Sixth form

22. Students enjoy being in the sixth form. They speak about the very good relationships that have been developed with their teachers. They feel they are generally respected and treated like adults and this encourages them to act accordingly. Their mature attitudes to learning help to promote a good level of debate, which results in a productive working environment and is reflected in their good levels of achievement. The behaviour of students in the sixth form is very good. Students value and respect others and get on well together. The small number of girls in classes feel well integrated into the school.
23. Sixth form students develop into confident and independent young people and act as good role models to other pupils. They willingly offer their help and undertake their roles of responsibility conscientiously. The head boy and his deputy, the senior prefects and team captains are respected and offer a good service to the school. The student council runs a number of social events to raise funds for the student common room.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. In particular, the good quality of teaching, the good quality of advice and guidance given by tutors and pastoral staff and the very effective partnership with parents are ensuring that most students achieve well.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Assessment of students' work is satisfactory overall, but good in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and sometimes inspirational throughout the school.
- Teaching is characterised by high expectations and high levels of challenge.
- Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and expertise.
- Marking does not always inform pupils of how to improve and pupils are not always clear how to improve their work or reach their target.

Commentary

24. Pupils themselves consider that they are well taught and that teachers expect them to do their best. In the pre-inspection questionnaire 95 per cent of pupils considered that they were taught well and 98 per cent considered that the teachers expected them to work hard. At the parents' meeting held with inspectors before the inspection, parents said that they consider the high quality of teaching to be one of the school's strengths. Inspectors judge the quality of teaching overall to be good. In some subjects, notably mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography and music, teaching is very good.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 159 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
10 (6.3%)	63 (39.6%)	54 (33.9%)	28 (17.6%)	4 (2.5%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

25. Characteristics of the most effective teaching include the confident subject expertise of the teachers, high levels of expectation and challenge, and a rapid pace of learning. In an excellent Year 10 statistics lesson in mathematics, all of these features were present. In addition, the teacher skilfully encouraged pupils to think more deeply about useful and useless data. Indeed, teacher intervention was kept to a minimum in order to extend the pupils' own understanding and problem solving skills. This was a very able group of pupils who were very receptive to the high levels of challenge and very high pace of learning. The atmosphere for learning created by the teacher was outstanding.
26. In another very good lesson, a Year 9 history class was examining the Treaty of Versailles. Following an effective starter exercise, the teacher challenged the class to consider the purpose of peace treaties, summarising the key points. Pupils were encouraged to test their ideas against source evidence and extend and deepen their thinking. The lesson was extremely well planned and organised and all pupils developed an ability to analyse issues in a balanced and mature way. A short video was played towards the end of the lesson to summarise the key points and pupils consolidated their learning by explaining their understanding to a partner at the end.
27. The use of starter activities and plenaries - in which learning is consolidated and reviewed at the end of the lesson - is being increasingly adopted. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to interest and engage the pupils in relevant and interesting activities, and to plan work that builds successfully on previous learning. Very good relationships encourage a purposeful and productive climate for learning in classrooms. Many teachers are particularly good at offering encouragement and building confidence in the pupils' ability to learn independently of the teacher. Good use is made of ICT and the library to develop research and independent learning skills.
28. Pupils themselves reported how much they valued the commitment of teachers to their progress. They particularly valued the extra time teachers were happy to devote to supporting and helping them with difficulties, and holiday revision classes were welcomed by pupils in Years 10 and 11. However, some pupils were critical of a small number of teachers who failed to provide help and merely expected them to keep up with the work even if they were struggling. In a number of subjects, but especially in physical education, the commitment of teachers to provide additional and extra-curricular activities is very much valued by the students.
29. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in small groups is very good. A specialist literacy teacher makes very good use of prior assessment and plans activities very well to meet these pupils' specific needs. Lessons are taught at a brisk pace, with a variety of motivating tasks. As a result, pupils improve their spelling and study skills very well in these lessons. They are aware of their targets for improvement and work hard to achieve these. For example, they improve their keyboard skills sufficiently to use laptop computers efficiently in other lessons. However, pupils only have one of these lessons each week and subject teachers do not follow up this work in other lessons. Most are aware of pupils' individual needs but rarely take these into account in their planning. As a result, pupils who write slowly sometimes do not complete work and those with spelling difficulties often have their mistakes uncorrected. Some teachers make too many negative comments when marking the

work of these and other lower attaining pupils, rather than providing guidance and encouragement to improve. A learning support assistant works effectively with pupils on their own with more severe needs. She enables them to achieve well in lessons and also ensures that they do not become too dependent on her support.

30. By and large, homework is used effectively to extend and support work in class, as well as to develop research and independent learning skills. However both parents and pupils reported some inconsistencies in the setting of homework. Despite the published timetable, work is not always set at the time given. Homework diaries are a useful means of communication between home and school and are generally used well to record the setting of homework.
31. The school has recently introduced assessment for learning strategies. The implementation of this is currently mixed. Particularly good work is underway in history and mathematics, ensuring that a range of skills is assessed, and that the grading of attainment and effort is based on good evidence. These subjects are also ensuring that pupils are more involved in the assessment process, so that all pupils become aware of what steps are necessary in order to improve, other than just 'work harder'. However less effective assessment processes were seen in business studies, modern foreign languages, and religious education.
32. The routine marking of pupils' work is also inconsistent across the school, and even within subjects. This is partly because of insufficient monitoring of pupils' work by heads of department, but also because there is a lack of clarity about the school's expectations. In the best examples of marking seen, positive comments were the norm, with clear guidance about how standards could be improved still further, providing real encouragement for pupils to improve.
33. The school has a well-established system for the regular assessment of pupils' work in all subjects. Parents receive five assessment reports a year, as well as the annual report, and are therefore kept well informed about pupils' standards and the effort they are making in each subject. The school has devised a method for converting assessment grades into an overall mark for performance, and these marks are compared as the school year progresses. This assessment process has gained the confidence of the majority of parents.
34. However, there are drawbacks with the present system. Pupils do not receive target grades until the beginning of Year 10, in spite of the information the school holds from national test results. There is also little reference to National Curriculum levels before the end of Year 9, and many assessments in Years 7 to 9 are not linked to clear criteria. This places a limit on the number of A grades, for example, and some pupils who are achieving well can be discouraged by the lower grades they receive for attainment.
35. Procedures for identifying and assessing pupils with special educational needs are good. Pupils' individual education plans provide them with precise, helpful targets. "PIN" sheets, provided by the school's special educational needs coordinator, give teachers basic information about pupils' individual needs, but subject teachers do not always take these into account in their planning.

Sixth form

36. As in the main school, teaching in the sixth form is good and, as a result, the learning seen in lessons was good. Most students feel that they are challenged in lessons; they value the help and encouragement they are given to study independently and to research topics on their own. In discussion with students, they felt that feedback on their progress was good, but that the depth and quality of marking varied. However they did appreciate the fact that work was assessed according to examination board criteria. The very good relationships between teachers and students are the basis for the successful teaching at this level and for students' good progress in their work. Of the subjects inspected in detail, teaching in English, mathematics, design and technology, history, music, physical education and sociology was judged very good; teaching in biology was good, while teaching in information technology, French and business studies was satisfactory.
37. Characteristic of lessons in the sixth form are very good relationships between staff and students and an atmosphere of mutual respect. Students respond confidently to the teaching and many bring a mature and thoughtful approach to their learning. In an excellent Year 12 English lesson on Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* the teacher had prepared some extensive background material and there was an expectation that students would read independently and work co-operatively. They responded very well to this challenge. The teacher worked hard in challenging and questioning individual students to extend their understanding, through a very good range of learning strategies, including "mind mapping". Overall, the students made outstanding gains in their knowledge and understanding as a result of the very well planned and imaginative teaching.
38. Less effective teaching is characterised by teaching which is over-directed and fails to allow students themselves to take responsibility for organising their own learning, or when discussion during lessons meanders and lacks focus. However students' learning skills are increasingly good. Most take care with the presentation of their work, and files and notes are, by and large, well organised and can be used effectively for revision.
39. Assessment in the sixth form is good. Regular assessments of work are undertaken by teachers, and parents are kept well informed of students' progress. Particularly good assessment processes have been developed in history and sociology, where there is very clear guidance for students about maintaining and improving standards. In these subjects, students enter into individual discussions with their teachers about the specific areas of their work that are good, and also those needing improvement.
40. The school uses a national system for establishing students' minimum target grades for AS/A level examinations in each subject. For most students this provides the appropriate degree of challenge, and a means of measuring whether they are making sufficient progress. Any under-performance can therefore be readily identified, and corrected. For some students the target set is insufficiently challenging.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. Arrangements for enrichment, including extra-curricular activities, are very good. Staffing and resources are good and meet the needs of students well, but several aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides good opportunities in all years.

- There is a very good range of activities beyond the normal school day.
- The curriculum is well matched to the needs of the pupils and the local community.
- There is a lack of continuity in the planning and support for pupils with identified needs who are likely to underachieve and who need help in organising their learning.
- The accommodation is inadequate in spite of recent improvements.

Commentary

41. The school provides a good curriculum for its pupils. It is broad and balanced and pupils in all years are taught all the required subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. However, coverage of the religious education curriculum lacks breadth from Year 8 onwards and does not fully meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.
42. Strengths of the curriculum include the well planned mathematics curriculum, which includes GCSE options for statistics, the geography curriculum, which has been imaginatively planned to appeal to boys in particular, the opportunities for boys to study both French and Spanish at GCSE, the opportunity to take drama and, notwithstanding the weaknesses in Years 8 and 9, the fact that all pupils take religious education at GCSE level. All pupils study ICT in specialist lessons until Year 9, where they begin a short-course GCSE. Next year, it is planned that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 will follow this course. Pupils also have satisfactory opportunities to enhance their learning using ICT in most other subjects. However, at present the school does not assess and report on the progress of pupils who are not studying for a GCSE in ICT, as is required.
43. The planning for citizenship is satisfactory, with taught elements during personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons and planned modules in other subjects such as mathematics, ICT, geography and religious education. Planning for PSHE is also satisfactory. The programme is taught in one lesson each fortnight, is broad and balanced and covers all requisite aspects. The outcomes in terms of pupil attitudes, behaviour and self-awareness in social terms are very good, and pupils value the provision highly.
44. Whilst the curriculum does not have a strong vocational element, certain subjects such as ICT, business studies and citizenship provide a useful work-related learning dimension. Nearly all pupils go on to study A-levels and all sixth formers go into higher education; this academic route is supported strongly by parents, and pupils themselves are very happy with the curriculum provided.
45. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is good. This is a rapidly developing area, with an effectively planned programme specifically for these pupils.
46. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. There are few pupils on the school's special needs register. Those with more severe social and communication difficulties receive good support from a learning support assistant and other teachers. A specialist support teacher provides very well for pupils who have difficulties planning and organising their work and for those with specific literacy difficulties. However, this support is only available one day each week and is rarely available for pupils after Year 7. This affects pupils' progress over time. The school has now identified several pupils, some of whom were previously on the special needs register, as underachieving because of lack of continuity in support for study skills.

47. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is mixed. One pupil who joined the school in Year 9 and is now in Year 10 is receiving effective specialist support once a week. There are four other pupils, one in the sixth form, who have received specialist support in the past. Their achievement is satisfactory, although two are not progressing as well as they might. There is no indication of what their specific language needs are, shared with all their class teachers. Consequently opportunities are missed for teachers to reinforce language learning by following a shared approach. There has been no recent training for staff on supporting bi-lingual learners.
48. The school provides a very good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities with sport high on the list. Over half the pupils are aiming for the gold Sports Mark. There are many educational and recreational trips in this country and abroad, and the school ensures that all pupils are able to participate, providing financial support if required. Joint drama productions take place annually with the local girls' school and the art department organises regular trips to galleries. Most subjects organise a club or event: mathematicians take part in mathematical challenges, there are writing and public speaking clubs and the lively school magazine is produced entirely by pupils. Nearly all subjects offer extra classes for pupils wishing to improve their progress, with many teachers giving up their after-school and holiday time to provide support. These are well attended and appreciated by pupils and parents.
49. The match of teachers to the curriculum is good and in some departments very good. Some departments such as history, physical education and design and technology are well staffed by subject specialists. Others such as mathematics, where there are temporary difficulties, and science have experienced problems recruiting specialist teachers. The match of support staff to the curriculum is satisfactory. Particularly commendable is the work done by the site manager, who maintains a difficult site as well as overseeing the new developments that are taking place.
50. The inadequacies in accommodation were a key issue at the last inspection. Although important improvements have been made since then to English and mathematics in particular, and new spaces for music and drama are being built, much of the accommodation is still unsatisfactory. In particular, indoor and outdoor spaces for physical education are poor, science laboratories remain inadequate and there is no specialist food space in design and technology. In each of these subjects, although standards are not affected, the curriculum is narrower than it might be because of the limitations imposed by the accommodation. Many classrooms are too small and corridors and staircases too narrow. Despite the school's best efforts, the fabric of much of the building is poor.
51. Resources are good overall. Most subjects have a good stock of textbooks and in mathematics, English and media studies, interactive whiteboards are available and used effectively. Since the last inspection, more computers, in the ratio of one to every five pupils, have been provided but not all departments have their own provision. The library in the main school is well used and has a good stock of books and other resources, including six computers with Internet access. The school's full-time librarian and her two assistant librarians work conscientiously and effectively to support learning in the school.

Sixth form

52. The school offers students a very wide range of A-level courses: over 40 in all. This is possible because of the local consortium arrangements that involve two other grammar schools with sixth forms. These arrangements are well planned and, because they are based on demand, nearly all students are able to study the combination of courses they wish. Courses that would not be economically viable in one school are possible because students can move between the schools' synchronised timetables. Mathematics, science, English, geography and sociology stand out as providing lively and relevant courses. All students study at least four subjects in their first year, including a general studies examination. While religious education is not formally provided, aspects are included within general studies. This is a very academic sixth form with very little demand for vocational courses. However, students participate in games, theatre visits, Young Enterprise and a good selection of clubs or societies. Extra-curricular activities are very good in mathematics, science, English, geography, and PE, whilst the school council, school magazine and counselling support provide other opportunities to become involved in the life of the school.
53. The sixth-form resources centre, which has been provided since the last inspection, is a facility that is highly valued by students. There are twelve computers available and the centre also has a well-stocked careers library and an office for Connexions staff.

Care, guidance and support

Procedures to ensure pupils' care and welfare are very good. The quality of support, advice and guidance is good. Career guidance is very well developed and integrated effectively into the personal, social and health educational programme from an early stage. Induction arrangements are very good and facilitate pupils' movement across the different stages of the school. Opportunities to involve pupils and seek their views are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pastoral systems are well developed to support pupils' personal and academic development and monitor their progress.
- Pupils receive good support and guidance as they move through the school, enabling them to make well-informed choices.
- Issues relating to health and safety and child protection at the time of the last inspection have now been addressed.
- Sixth form students value the support and advice received as a result of the good rapport established with their teachers and form tutors.

Commentary

54. The provision for pupils' health, welfare and protection is very good, and parents are delighted that their sons are so well cared for and supported during their time at school. Form tutors and heads of year know pupils very well and the pastoral system works very effectively. Welfare assistants provide sensitive support to meet the health and medical needs of pupils. Outside agencies such as the school nurse and youth crime reduction officer are regular visitors and contribute effectively to pupils' personal development through the PSHE programme. Most pupils like school and enjoy being there. Although some were uncertain whether they would approach an adult if they had a problem, the majority think they are treated fairly and that the school is interested in

their views. Pupils particularly value the peer support for anti-bullying provided by the Fusion group.

55. Child protection arrangements are effectively in place. The site manager, who has responsibility for health and safety, is diligent in ensuring procedures are securely in place and that risk assessments are reviewed regularly. Governors take their responsibilities for health and safety issues conscientiously. Concerns reported during the last inspection have been addressed.
56. Procedures to monitor and support pupils' personal and academic progress are good, and pupils receive good quality advice and support throughout their school career. Pupils themselves are involved in target setting in some subjects. Specialist advice and additional support is also provided through learning mentors and a counsellor for those who are referred for extra support. Careful monitoring and regular assessment keeps staff, parents and pupils well informed.
57. Induction to the school in Year 7 is very well structured, and enables pupils to settle quickly. Guidance at critical times such as the transitions to GCSE and sixth form courses is good and provides pupils with sensitive and well-informed advice. Careers advice is very well structured and carefully integrated into the PSHE programme, and pupils have access to relevant software and comprehensive resources in the careers library. Support is also regularly given by the Connexions adviser.
58. The school's processes for listening to and acting on pupils' views are satisfactory. School council representatives meet regularly, and have been effective in organising yearly outings and getting new lunchtime benches.

Sixth form

59. The school provides good quality support and guidance to students in the sixth form. Sixth form tutors and subject staff work very well together to monitor their students' achievements. Any individual learning problems are quickly identified and additional support provided. Students applying for university receive intensive help with their applications. Balanced and impartial advice is offered to enable them to choose the most appropriate options for further study or employment. Students themselves feel well supported, although some felt that they were not given sufficient careers advice.
60. Sixty per cent of students do not feel that the school seeks and responds to their views, although there are regular surveys in which student views are canvassed.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents are very supportive and have very positive views about the school. Links with the local community and businesses are satisfactory. Good collaborative links are established with partner institutions to offer a wider range of courses for students in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents value the information provided, including the six-weekly progress reports.
- The school's very good partnership with its parents makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.

- Links with the local community in both Southborough and Tunbridge Wells are underdeveloped.
- The good collaborative links with partner institutions broaden the curriculum at sixth form level and enhance staff development opportunities.
- Good links with universities enable a smooth transition to higher education.

Commentary

61. The school's partnership with its parents is very good. Parents comment very favourably about the school, praising all aspects of its work. In both the parents' meeting held before the inspection and through the parents' questionnaire, it is clear that they are very supportive. In particular, they value the strong leadership of the headteacher, find the staff very approachable and feel the school provides a good education for their sons. The school seeks to keep parents updated about ongoing activities and events through regular newsletters, meetings and relevant documentation. Parents are fully informed about key events as their sons progress through the school - such as 'option choices' in Year 9. Good day-to-day home/school links are maintained with form tutors through homework diaries. The thriving parent teacher association, which runs a number of social and fund-raising events each year, raises significant funds for the school.
62. Parents, including those of pupils with special educational needs, are regularly advised about the progress of their sons through consultation and review meetings, and the six-weekly progress reports are well received. Annual reports to parents give a clear indication of progress but do not always make clear how individual pupils might improve.
63. Links with the local community are satisfactory. The school draws pupils from a wide catchment area and has therefore established few strong contacts with the immediate neighbourhood. Some local businesses contribute to the Young Enterprise scheme and the work experience programme but many pupils go further afield. The school has identified the need to improve community links both in Southborough and Tunbridge Wells as part of its bid for specialist schools status. Wider links are being established with the international community through the school's various music and sporting activities; in addition an exchange link with a school in India has been created.
64. The links with partner institutions are well developed through a number of local initiatives such as the Tunbridge Wells Network and the West Kent Learning Federation. These include staff development opportunities and collaborative programmes with local primary and secondary schools. These help facilitate the transfer of pupils into Year 7 but also provide valuable enrichment opportunities for pupils.

Sixth form

65. Parents are very happy with the sixth form provision for students. They value the good communication with staff, the regular updates on progress and the fact that they are kept fully informed if there are any problems or concerns.
66. There are few links with the local community. Opportunities for community service are limited and only a small number of students are involved in the Millennium Volunteer scheme. The good links established with Tunbridge Wells Girls Grammar School and Skinners School have expanded curriculum possibilities and are enabling students to pursue a wider range of courses and combinations of subjects than were previously available. There are well-established programmes of visits and links with universities that help pupils identify and progress onto the next step in their career development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are good. Very effective leadership by the headteacher ensures that his vision for the school's development is shared by the whole community. He is well supported by his senior team and managers at all levels. Management is good. The work of governors is very good and they offer committed support and challenge. Statutory requirements are not fully met for collective worship, religious education in the sixth form, or assessing and reporting ICT in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The principled and very good leadership of the headteacher inspires the respect of the whole school community and ensures a strong sense of common purpose.
- Management is good and the school runs smoothly and efficiently
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not consistent enough to ensure self-evaluation is embedded at all levels and good practice is shared more widely.
- There is a strong commitment to the inclusion of all pupils.

Commentary

67. Leadership and management are good overall. The school aims to ensure that all pupils fulfil their potential within a disciplined and caring environment. To a large extent, the school achieves its aims and most pupils thrive in the opportunities the school provides. The school has made good improvements since the last inspection in academic standards, particularly at A-level, and in the quality of teaching. There is a continuing drive for ever higher standards. The school has received School Achievement Awards in 2001, 2002 and 2003. It is currently putting together a bid for specialist humanities college status.
68. The headteacher leads with authority. His expectations and values are clear and he has the respect of the whole school community. His leadership has moved the school forward confidently and he has the committed support of both governors and staff. He is the fulcrum for the school's determined drive for further improvement.
69. Members of the senior management team, which includes two deputy headteachers and heads of upper and lower school, are an experienced and thoughtful team who work well together. They work confidently and pragmatically and as a result the school runs smoothly and efficiently. Line management and other responsibilities are clear and consequently communication through the school is effective. Staff feel that their ideas and views are valued.
70. Management procedures are effective and thorough. Performance management is well established and provides a good framework for monitoring and continuing professional development. The senior team has taken action to improve the performance of some under-performing departments, although there is still more to be done. The school has not developed a sufficiently differentiated response to ensure intervention at departmental level is related to need, and that support is focused where it is needed most, enabling successful heads of department to monitor and manage their teams with more autonomy, while intervening more directly in others.

71. Heads of department and heads of year are held to account for the work of their teams, and the quality of leadership at subject level and within pastoral teams is at least good and more often very good. While there is strong accountability in terms of examination performance, heads of department are taking a less proactive role in monitoring teaching and learning within their subjects. As a consequence there are some inconsistencies in, for example, the quality of marking and homework. Self-evaluation procedures are not deeply embedded, particularly at departmental level, and good practice is not always being shared widely.
72. The school has recently appointed a new special educational needs co-ordinator. He provides good leadership for special educational needs provision and has reviewed the school's policy, which clearly outlines procedures to meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. However, he has insufficient time to monitor pupils' progress or the extent to which teachers are following the policy. As a result, special educational needs provision is not fully evaluated and areas for further development have not been identified.
73. The school's strong commitment to inclusion is effectively demonstrated in the care with which it ensures all pupils have opportunities to take part in school activities and in the detailed approach adopted to monitoring the progress of individual students.
74. The school improvement plan sets clear and appropriate targets, and all staff and governors are involved in establishing priorities. Departmental improvement plans provide a good framework for subject improvements in many cases, but are not always closely related to the whole school plan. There are very comprehensive and effective procedures for ensuring teachers' continuing professional development needs are met.
75. Governors are very well informed about the work of the school, are confident in their role and fully aware of their responsibilities as a governing body. They bring a very good range of experience and professional expertise to the school's governance, and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, despite the fact that the committee structure is currently in transition. Governors are fully involved in strategic planning, and progress on the school improvement plan is monitored regularly. They are confident in their ability to question and challenge the headteacher and senior staff. Statutory requirements are met, except with regard to the provision of a daily act of collective worship, the provision for religious education in the sixth form, and the requirement to assess and report on the progress in ICT for pupils not following an examination course in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' development and achievements are not impeded as a result of these statutory breaches.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,906,162	Balance from previous year	6,448
Total expenditure	3,825,171	Balance carried forward to the next	87,439
Expenditure per student	3,283		

76. The school's budget is managed well, and the school provides good value for money. Governors have a very good overview of the budget and are regularly updated with clear monitoring statements. The school applies best-value principles and is careful to explore the market and compare tenders. Overall budget priorities are guided by educational priorities, and the headteacher himself keeps a close control of budget

planning. A significant amount of money is raised through parental goodwill. Designated funds, including those for staff training, are used well. Measures to introduce workplace reform have been prudently implemented.

Sixth form

77. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The head of upper school combines this role with managing Years 10 and 11, and adopts an open and intelligent approach. As a result standards have improved significantly since the last inspection. There is a clear identity for the sixth form and day-to-day management is effective. Students' progress is monitored carefully and performance data is used well to ensure intervention when underachievement is identified.
78. Combining management of the head of sixth form with responsibility for Years 10 and 11 means that some aspects of the role are less well developed. Issues, for example, identified in a student questionnaire, have not been followed up with the students themselves. As in the main school, the monitoring of teaching is not consistent enough to ensure that best practice is fully shared. Courses are cost effective; best-value principles are well applied.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work-related learning (WRL) is satisfactory; statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work experience is well established in Year 11 and pupils are guided by thorough preparation and evaluation of their experience to gain an appropriate understanding of the world of work.
- There is a flexible WRL programme developing for Years 10 and 11, which is being delivered through PSHE and some other subjects.
- Although relevant skills are covered in some subjects, opportunities to develop skills have not been identified fully in others and this development is at an early stage.

Commentary

79. Work experience is well planned. The school works closely with the Education Business Partners to ensure that all Year 11 pupils have a wide range of placements to choose from. Pupils are also given the opportunity to organise their own placement. They are well prepared for their work experience and learning from the work placement is adequately developed through PSHE lessons and during tutor time. Pupils are awarded a certificate of excellence for the successful completion of their work experience and records of this learning experience are filed as part of their school records to support future references requested for individual pupils.
80. The PSHE programme also enables pupils in Years 10 and 11 to develop a range of skills, for example in writing curriculum vitae and preparing for interviews. Pupils also benefit from visits from outside speakers. The programme offers vocational opportunities through the work experience programme and broad range of GCSE courses, as there are no vocational courses available in the school.
81. In addition, an annual 'Word of Work Day' for Year 10 pupils provides good opportunities for pupils to develop understanding of the world of work. Year 10 pupils also have opportunities through a Young Enterprise Programme. As part of the schools' links with Education Business Partnership, pupils visit local industries and benefit from outside speakers over the course of six weeks.
82. Work-related skills are enhanced further in a number of subjects. For example in mathematics, pupils develop skills related to banking, taxation, VAT and interest rates. In design and technology, they consider industrial processes and health and safety, and use ICT to both design and manufacture a range of products. In geography, pupils consider the industrial changes in Docklands and study the change and growth of industries. Teachers in modern foreign languages use the work experience theme to enable pupils to complete a piece of coursework. They benefit particularly well from this as a result of appropriate timing and relevance, which coincides well with preparation of pupils for work experience.
83. The co-ordination of WRL is satisfactory. The WRL programme is developing well and there has been an audit across subjects both to identify aspects that relate to pupils' preparation for work and to plan further learning. Although there is a draft policy, this is not yet fully in place. Subjects that contribute to the WRL curriculum have not been fully mapped. A survey of pupils has identified skills they would like to be included in the programme and the school is now taking steps to address this.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average; pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good, often better, and this results in most pupils learning well.
- Good leadership and management ensure that an experienced team of teachers work well together.
- There is a need for more sustained support for a few pupils with language and literacy difficulties across subjects.

Commentary

84. Standards in English are well above average. Although most pupils are above average on entry there is a small but growing minority who have below average literacy skills. Attainment in national tests in Year 9 is well above the national average for boys and for all schools. Up to 2003 it was below average when compared with similar schools. Although national comparisons are not yet available for 2004, results in 2004 tests improved. Results in GCSE English and English literature are well above the national average. Results for GCSE English literature are better than for English, where there has been a slight decline in recent years with fewer pupils attaining the highest grades. Pupil achievement is good across the school. High and average attaining pupils are well challenged. Most pupils speak articulately and confidently, read independently and critically from a range of fiction and non-fiction texts and write with increasing fluency and accuracy. However, a small minority of pupils with literacy difficulties progress more slowly.
85. Teaching and learning are good across all years with some examples of very good teaching. Where teaching is most effective lessons are well planned and structured. They often begin with a lively starter activity to focus pupils' attention. Teachers' questioning is brisk, involving all the pupils, and tight time targets result in purposeful work. Teachers meet differing learning needs by using a variety of activities and groupings, for example using the interactive whiteboard for illustrations, or allowing pupils time to exchange ideas in small discussion groups. There are high expectations that pupils will read and annotate texts quickly before reporting back, when planning longer oral reports, and they respond well to the challenge. Role-play and other drama techniques are used very well to reinforce learning. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, pupils cross-examined various characters on the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, and as a result deepened their understanding of the play. There is very good use of planned time to introduce Year 7 pupils to the school library and to encourage pupils' wider private reading. Pupils also respond very well to opportunities to use ICT: for example Year 10 pupils used computers to produce highly polished travel brochures.

86. In the few instances where teaching is less effective, the teacher does not make the learning objectives clear enough at the start. Sometimes the pace is slow and there is insufficient planning for differing needs, the teacher relying too heavily on exercises from a course book. On occasions the teacher does not insist on all pupils participating in discussion, or ensuring whether all have understood. Although most marking is helpful there is not always specific enough guidance for some pupils with English as an additional language or other literacy difficulties.
87. Leadership of English is very good; management is good. A team of well-qualified and experienced teachers work well together. The head of department has a clear vision and understands the strengths and weaknesses in the subject, and there is a clear development plan. Some improvements, for example in assessment, are already making an impact. Although teachers new to the department are well supported, monitoring of teaching and learning is inadequate, especially of non-specialist teachers. Although there are some very good opportunities for pupils to use ICT, not all pupils have similar experiences because opportunities are not planned within the scheme of work.
88. The department provides some very good opportunities for enrichment. Additional support is given through booster classes for examinations and there is a range of extra-curricular activities including debates, science fiction writing, theatre visits and the school magazine. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

89. Standards of language and literacy are well above average in most subjects with pupils reading critically and expressing themselves coherently, orally and in writing, making good use of the technical language of the subject. However, a few pupils with English as an additional language, or with specific literacy difficulties, would benefit from co-ordinated programmes of support across the curriculum.

French and Spanish

Provision in French and Spanish is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to language learning.
- Good leadership and management of the department provide clear vision and strategies for raising standards.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory and does not enable pupils to know how well they are doing and how to improve.
- There are too few opportunities for ICT and independent reading.

Commentary

90. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were well above the national average at grades A*-C in French for all pupils and for boys. However, overall pupils performed less well in French than in most of their other subjects. In Spanish in 2004, GCSE

results were above average, but as in French, pupils performed less well in Spanish than in other subjects.

91. Standards seen in French and Spanish in Year 9 are well above average. Pupils enter the school with well above average standards overall, but for most pupils French and Spanish are new subjects and this represents good achievement. In Year 9 in both languages pupils can speak and write about a range of topics; they can already use the past, present and immediate future tenses and can express opinions. Higher attaining pupils can write and speak at length with a variety of vocabulary and structures. Pupils respond very well to the range of challenging listening and reading texts in the textbooks. All pupils demonstrate a high level of grammatical knowledge, which they apply to their own language and which is often very accurate. All pupils study a second language and they use their language learning skills to acquire new language rapidly. After a year and a term of French, some Year 9 pupils are already able to speak and write about different topics and are starting to use the past tense with confidence. In Year 11, standards seen in French and Spanish are also well above average, which represents good achievement. Pupils have prepared extended writing coursework tasks about topics such as healthy lifestyles and a school advertisement, in which they use a variety of structures and a range of tenses and opinions backed up with reasoned argument. They have begun extended preparation for the GCSE speaking examination and most pupils can speak with confidence about a range of topics. Higher attaining pupils vary their language with a wide range of idiomatic expressions. All pupils can tackle GCSE-type listening and reading tasks and have very good grammatical knowledge.
92. Overall teaching and learning in Years 9 to 11 in both French and Spanish are good. All teachers have very good subject knowledge providing a good model for pupils' own language. They have high expectations and place good emphasis on pupils' accuracy and pronunciation. Because of teachers' good class management, pupils work effectively in pairs and listen well to each other. Teachers plan a range of activities so that all pupils contribute confidently and have very positive attitudes to language learning. Many lessons begin with an imaginative starter activity, which establishes the language and provides a stepping-stone for the ensuing learning. Well-planned plenary time at the end of the lesson often provides opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own learning. Teachers provide clear grammatical explanations so that pupils can use a range of structures accurately and homework tasks reinforce the language pupils learn in class. In most lessons French or Spanish is used as the main means of communication in the classroom and pupils respond consistently in the foreign language. However in some lessons, as a result of the use of English by the teacher when French or Spanish are appropriate, pupils do not use the language themselves to communicate with either the teacher or each other. Marking of pupils' work is thorough with mistakes corrected; however comments for improvement are inconsistent and sometimes quite negative. The assessment of pupils' work is unsatisfactory and does not inform pupils of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. In Years 7 to 9, assessment is not related closely enough to National Curriculum levels. Although some examples of pupils' use of ICT were seen, it is not sufficiently used to support pupils' language learning. Teaching is very much based on the textbook and there are few opportunities for pupils to learn through authentic materials from the countries and communities of the target language and for independent reading.
93. Leadership and management in the department are good. The head of department has been in post just over a term and has already developed strategies that have resulted in improved teaching and learning across the department. The clear focus on

monitoring in the department and revised schemes of work have resulted in more consistent classroom practice and improving standards. Schemes of work and departmental documentation do not indicate effective assessment procedures or specific strategies for raising the attainment at the end of Year 11. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership of the department has created excellent teamwork.
- Teaching is well planned and very thorough.
- Pupils' achievement is very good, maintaining very high standards.
- There is very good use of new technology to enhance learning opportunities.
- Individual pupils are well known by their teachers; they respond positively in lessons.

Commentary

94. On entry to the school, pupils' standards in mathematics are very high. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004, standards were also very high, as they have been in each of the last four years. These results have a close correlation with teachers' assessments, and represent very good achievement by pupils. Overall results were higher than in English and science. In the GCSE examinations in Year 11 in 2004, standards remained very high, with two fifths of pupils gaining grades A* or A, and almost all pupils gaining one of the higher grades. These results matched those of pupils in similar schools. Pupils performed better in mathematics than in most of their other subjects.
95. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 7 to 11 were very high, and similar to those gained in recent examinations. Pupils' achievements are very good throughout. All pupils are provided with challenging work, including those pupils with the potential to obtain the higher grades. Pupils respond positively to the work, and there is normally a very good working atmosphere in class. They take pride in the presentation of their answers. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very secure. Pupils who find the work more difficult are well known to their teachers; they persevere with their work, and therefore obtain creditable results.
96. Teaching is very good overall, and occasionally excellent. Pupils therefore learn very well. Teachers in the department have responded positively to recent recruitment difficulties; by rearranging timetables they have ensured that pupils continue to receive appropriate teaching, including those taking external examinations this year. Teachers possess a very good command of their subject, and their planning is extremely thorough. There is very good progression in the work as a result. Although pupils are not always encouraged by the teachers praising their efforts, teaching methods are beginning to show greater variety. The use of plenary sessions at the end of lessons to review what has been learnt, and to consolidate keywords, is not well established. There is very good use of the new whiteboards to help pupils to learn; work with computers, such as the analysis of data, is of a very high standard. There are regular assessments of pupils' work, but grades are not related to National Curriculum levels.

The assessment system does not provide sufficient encouragement for the small number of lower attaining pupils.

97. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department is experienced and committed, and leads by example in his teaching, and in his relationships with pupils and colleagues. There is excellent teamwork within the department. The organisation of teaching is very thorough, and the curriculum provides good opportunities for the use of computers. The introduction of statistics into the Year 10 options is a good example of how this forward-looking department constantly attempts to improve its provision. However, there is insufficient monitoring of teachers' performance in order to share best practice, for instance in the quality of the marking of pupils' work.
98. Since the previous inspection, there has been good progress in the work of the mathematics department. This has undoubtedly been helped by the provision of a very good suite of rooms, each with its own whiteboard and projector. However, the main reasons for this progress are the dedication of the head of department and the team of teachers, many of them part-time, and the positive response they receive from pupils.

Mathematics across the curriculum

99. The level of pupils' skills in the use of mathematics across the curriculum is well above average. Most pupils are very confident when faced with calculations, formulae, or graphical analysis across a range of subjects. However, a minority of pupils turn too readily to a calculator for basic calculations. Additional use of mathematical games, for instance at the start of mathematics lessons, would help to overcome this tendency.
100. A number of subjects make a good contribution to the development of pupils' mathematical skills. In art, for instance, they show very good spatial awareness, and in physical education they analyse data about distances and timings. In design and technology, there are opportunities to apply numeracy skills in all material areas, and in geography pupils interpret climate graphs. There is also regular use of graphs and formulae in science lessons, particularly during investigations.
101. The monitoring of mathematics across the curriculum is insufficient to ensure that there is consistency in the application of number, and in the use of mathematical terms. Increased consistency would be of particular benefit to the minority of pupils who lack confidence with calculations and other mathematical applications.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high in Years 9 and 11.
- Teaching is very good and this ensures that pupils make very good progress.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and work together as an effective team; they are liked and respected by the pupils.
- The work of the department is well organised and very well managed.

- The laboratory accommodation is unsatisfactory and has an adverse effect on learning.
- Marking is too inconsistent and some teachers fail to indicate how individual pupils can improve their work.

Commentary

102. In 2003, the national test results at the end of Year 9 were very high in comparison to the national average and in line with the standard achieved in similar schools. 2004 saw a significant improvement with a large majority of pupils achieving the highest National Curriculum level in science. The last three years have seen a consistent improvement in standards. This is largely due to the high quality of teaching and the implementation of a new scheme of work that is more appropriate for high attaining pupils. GCSE results in 2004 were very high in relation to schools nationally and above the results predicted for these pupils. The percentage achieving the highest grades of A* and A was just over 40 per cent: a figure significantly higher than other subjects in the school. There was a big improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining an A* grade.
103. The standard of work seen during the inspection in lessons and in pupils' exercise books is very high in all years. Pupils' achievements are very good throughout Years 7-11. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and can apply them confidently to everyday situations.
104. Teaching is very good. Teachers are caring and know their pupils well. Their subject knowledge is very good and they prepare the pupils well for the external examinations. Pupils are grateful for the revision sessions arranged in the holidays and are appreciative of the way teachers are prepared to give up their free time to help them succeed. The best lessons observed contained a range of different pupil tasks with teachers responding to the needs of the pupils and presenting the science concepts in a variety of ways. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on DNA and genetic engineering, the teacher used computer animations, showing the detailed structure of DNA, to immediately engage the interest of the pupils. The lesson contained a high degree of challenge for these able pupils, often encroaching on concepts normally taught in AS Biology. The pupils responded well to the teacher's high expectations and very effective learning occurred.
105. Teachers generally mark books on a regular basis but they vary significantly in the extent to which they show pupils how they can improve their work. The departmental approach to marking is not consistently applied. However the new system of pupils in Year 9 auditing their knowledge at the start and end of a topic is improving their awareness of their progress.
106. Leadership and management are very good. Good systems are in place to monitor the progress of the pupils and an analysis of the performance of the department takes place each year with action plans being drawn up to further improve standards. The head of department's commitment to the on-going development of the department is exemplary. As a consequence, he leads a dedicated and unified team of staff who are very supportive of each other. Innovative approaches and developments are always being considered. The recent investment in new textbooks and a new scheme of work for Years 7-9 is already having a positive impact on learning. The very competent team of well-qualified technicians provides excellent support. However, the number of laboratories is insufficient and some science lessons are being taught in classrooms with no opportunity for practical work. Many of the laboratories are also badly in need of refurbishment and do not create a good learning environment. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 9 and in the GCSE examination are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are good at both levels, leading to good achievement.
- Pupils enjoy ICT and use it creatively on their own initiative.
- Assessment in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory for pupils on non-exam courses.
- The school misses opportunities to enrich learning in other subjects using ICT.

Commentary

107. Standards in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well above average: a big improvement on 2003 when they were judged to be nearer average. Standards in the 2004 GCSE examination were also well above average. Nearly all pupils gained a grade in the A*-C range and all passed. The percentage of pupils gaining an A or A* was well above average.
108. Current standards in Year 9 are well above average. Pupils enter the school with very mixed experience but overall above average knowledge and skills. Achievement is good and pupils reach a high level of skill and understanding using 'Office' applications on the GCSE short course in Year 9. Their experience of a broader range of software such as painting or making music is more limited. Standards in the current Year 11 are well above average on the GCSE course; pupils produce sophisticated brochures for a commercial organisation, for example. They are helped by their well above average communication and numerical skills, which are actively developed in the teaching. Achievement on this course is good. Pupils not taking the examination also achieve well in maintaining and developing their skills on their own initiative as well as in English, mathematics and science lessons.
109. Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. Teachers have a very good understanding and knowledge of the subject and high expectations for the pupils. The level of challenge and pace in the lessons is often very good and teachers can rely on the good relationships and enthusiasm of the pupils. These high expectations sometimes limit progress in less successful lessons because the teacher has not sufficiently taken into account the needs of the slower readers or less able pupils. The assessment process in Years 7 and 8 does not involve pupils sufficiently in assessing and improving their work in line with the National Curriculum. Teachers do not always explain to pupils exactly what they are expected to learn during a lesson. In the GCSE lessons, teachers have taken care to clearly illustrate the link between what the pupils need to do and the marks that they can gain. In this way, pupils know how to develop their work and improve their progress. Teachers often have to work hard to overcome the cramped conditions and poor sight lines in the ICT rooms but these still sometimes make communication difficult and limit progress. The electronic whiteboards and up-to-date software are powerful tools that teachers usually employ to good effect. In a very good ICT lesson, pupils were able to demonstrate what they knew to others, using the large screen. In a physics lesson, pupils viewed Internet video of ultrasound scans of a beating heart.
110. The leadership and management of ICT are good. The recently appointed leader is a good role model and is committed to ensuring that all teachers work consistently towards raising standards. The examinations courses, resources and timetabling are well managed. The decision to introduce a short course GCSE in Year 9 is helping

pupils reach high standards and take a more active part in their own learning. On the other hand, the provision for ICT and the assessment of pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not yet meet statutory requirements. Although most students use ICT, this is often at home or in school on their own initiative. Workplace re-modelling has meant that the technical staff now play a greater role in the provision of resources and training, releasing teachers to work more effectively in the classroom.

111. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good overall. Pupils are now taking more responsibility for their own learning in the examination classes. Teaching has improved and more subjects contribute towards the pupils' ICT experiences. The curriculum now meets statutory requirements for Years 7-9, and sensible plans are in place to ensure the subject is taught to all pupils in Years 10 and 11. There have been significant improvements to both accommodation and resources.

ICT across the curriculum

112. The use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum is variable. In mathematics and science, for example, it is used imaginatively but ICT is not used in religious education. The ICT curriculum makes a sound contribution to the school's provision of work-related learning. Pupils are well equipped to deal with the main 'Office' applications they will meet in later stages of education and employment. In addition, pupils develop some experience in desktop publishing, computer-aided design and manufacture, sensing and logging data and controlling equipment. Many pupils have computers at home that they use for homework and those that do not have computers are able to use the school resources at lunchtimes and after school.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership has greatly improved the department over the last three years.
- Lesson planning is very good and supports a wide a varied range of learning experiences.
- Pupils respond very positively to the very high expectations.
- Assessment procedures, particularly marking, do not give clear enough targets for improvement.
- A very extensive range of fieldwork offers very good opportunities for pupils' investigations.
- Achievement is very good because of the very high quality teaching.

Commentary

113. GCSE results are well above average. In 2004, 31 per cent secured A* grades, the highest in the school. This represents very good achievement. A significant proportion of boys achieved results above their predicted grades. The department secures these outstanding results because of the very high quality of the teaching and the imaginative and varied range of learning opportunities for the pupils. The standard of work seen at this stage in Year 11 is well above average and indicates very good achievement.

Lesson observations and the work scrutiny show that the standard achieved by Year 9 is also well above average, reflecting very good achievement. All pupils make very good progress because of the targeted support they receive in class. The pupils have very positive attitudes towards geography; they enjoy the subject and work very hard.

114. Teaching and learning are very good. Lesson planning is meticulous and this provides a very strong learning environment with a very wide range of learning opportunities. Participation is very high, the boys express their views confidently and they listen carefully to each other. Thinking and reasoning skills are thoroughly developed. There is a very effective use of maps, photographs and diagrams. Whole class feedback is very effective with the lesson aims systematically reinforced. The pace of work is very fast with considerable challenge for all the pupils. The teachers have very high expectations that encourage and stretch the boys to achieve very well. Pupils expect to develop their geographical skills and this emphasis on improvement results in the very impressive GCSE figures. However some marking of books is irregular and there is a lack of consistency within the team. Although some targets for improvement are given, not all pupils have sufficient guidance, particularly the below average pupils. Although individual teachers' records are good, there is no departmental record of pupils' progress and this makes it more difficult to monitor overall progress and to identify quickly enough the few areas of concern.
115. Leadership is very good because there is a very clear vision supported by a very effective development plan. Under the current leadership there have been many new developments and improvements, particularly an improvement in teaching and achievement. Management is good because the department runs smoothly and effectively. The range of fieldwork has been considerably strengthened with activities in all years. The choice of the Docklands study in Year 11 offers many opportunities to link industrial and commercial use with social considerations. However the handling and interpretation of management data have yet to be fully implemented and there is currently no departmental collation of pupil data, which impedes the monitoring of pupils' progress. Overall this is a very effective department that has made very good improvements since the last inspection.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils throughout the school achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- The subject is very well led so that high expectations are being set.
- The very good attitudes of the pupils promote very good learning.
- Assessment procedures are used very well to target pupils' improvement and to track their progress.

Commentary

116. Standards in Year 9 are very high and match the teachers' assessments for 2004 when all Year 9 pupils reached at least level 6. This represents very good achievement by all pupils, given that they enter the school with skills in history that are above average. It is an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils have very well developed skills of analysing sources as they begin from an early stage in Year 7.

More able pupils in Year 9 have outstanding skills of enquiry and extended writing. Pupils explain very well the different interpretation of events and articulate their views with much confidence and clarity.

117. GCSE examination results have been consistently very high in recent years, and in 2004 they were outstanding. The proportion attaining A* and A grades was over three times the national average for boys. Evidence from the inspection is that standards by Year 11 are well above average. Given that current Year 11 pupils attained above average results at the end of Year 9, they are achieving very well. Pupils successfully evaluate sources for reliability and usefulness and make clear links between events. The more able write very well-structured essays with balanced arguments, although some less able pupils find this difficult and have weak factual recall. The small number of pupils with special educational needs achieve as well throughout the school as other pupils.
118. Overall, teaching and learning are very good, an improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons thoroughly with a variety of sharply timed and challenging activities. These extend pupils' knowledge, their analytical skills and their ability to work by themselves. Very good learning is also promoted by good relationships with pupils and pupils' very good attitudes to work. They are enthusiastic, work very well together and have the confidence to tackle challenging tasks by themselves. This is encouraged by the very good assessment procedures that very effectively track pupils' progress and set individual targets related to the National Curriculum. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 know their progress and how to improve through very effective peer assessment, although marking for improvement of their essay structure and literacy is inconsistent.
119. Leadership of the subject is very good. The head of department has a very clear vision for improvement and a strong determination to achieve it. She is a very good role model, setting high standards of teaching and expectations of pupils. Management is good. Thorough schemes of work provide good guidance in stressing the development of history skills; improvement has been good as all the concerns in the previous report have been tackled, except the use of ICT as access to computer rooms is still difficult. There is much good, informal exchange of ideas amongst teachers.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students are entered for a full GCSE, and obtain grades that are above the national average.
- All pupils have a sensitive awareness of the impact that religious faith has on a person's life.
- From Year 8 onwards the curriculum is narrow and does not fully prepare pupils for living in a multi-faith society.
- Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

120. In 2004 all pupils were entered for the GCSE examination and obtained grades that were above the national average. Performance data indicate that a minority of less able pupils underachieved but these results were obtained despite limited teaching time being allocated to the subject.

121. In Years 7-9, pupils have a sound knowledge of the beliefs and practices of three religions. They are able to clearly express their own views on religious topics and appreciate that religious faith can play a significant role in providing a framework for life. They are sensitive to the beliefs and values of others. While pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of Christianity and Buddhism, their knowledge and understanding of other religions is weaker. The broad foundation that is laid in Year 7 is not reinforced and their understanding of the diversity and richness of the other faiths that are found in our society is limited. However standards overall are above the national average, and pupils' achievements are satisfactory, despite the narrowness of the curriculum.
122. In Years 10 and 11, standards remain above average: achievement is broadly satisfactory. However, the demands of teaching the GCSE examination syllabus in restricted time means that the attention paid to other religious faiths is limited to an occasional mention. Pupils' understanding of the wider values, beliefs, ceremonies and festivals that contribute to the diverse culture in which we live lacks depth.
123. The quality of teaching and learning varies considerably but is satisfactory overall. The most effective teaching was outstanding, characterised by a very good knowledge of the subject and excellent use of pertinent questions to prompt deeper understanding and empathy in the pupils. However, less effective teaching is over-reliant on worksheets and textbooks from which pupils make notes. As a result, pupils' written work, while very well presented, is often identical. There is limited use of methods and resources that encourage pupils to explore their own responses to religious stimuli. As a result pupils find some teaching tedious and repetitive, and pupils are not developing evaluative and thinking skills. When classroom discussions do take place pupils demonstrate a very mature and sensitive attitude and are able to explore issues well but their contributions lack knowledge of religions other than Christianity and Buddhism. Pupils are given a large amount of homework that is only briefly marked with very limited formative comments.
124. Behaviour is generally good but at times an authoritarian ethos prevents pupils from fully engaging in co-operative learning. As a result a significant number of pupils are often listless, unengaged and at times resentful of the subject. They are submissive, polite, and cooperative but not committed.
125. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. Schemes of work are in place but need updating to bring them into line with recent developments. There is no clear analysis of results and no careful planning. There has been very little professional development and the department is not up to date with the latest developments in the agreed syllabus. There have been significant staffing problems that have recently been resolved, but the effect of these in a small department has placed a significant strain on the head of department. The contribution of the subject to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
126. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. All pupils are now entered for GCSE and examination results have improved. However the school does not fully meet legal requirements to provide religious education in the sixth form.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are very high in all design and technology subjects.
- Very good attitudes and relationships create very good conditions for learning.
- The quality of leadership and management of the subject is very good.

- The department has a limited range of computer-aided manufacture resources available.

Commentary

127. Teachers' own assessment of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 is well above average, which matches the well above average standards seen during the inspection. The 2004 GCSE results in design and technology are very high compared to the national average and over 80 per cent of boys achieved an A or A* grade. Achievement by pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
128. Pupils achieve very well in all material areas. Pupils work with a good range of materials, although they do not experience work in food technology. Throughout Years 7 to 9, pupils cover a good variety of skills and have well above average literacy and numeracy skills, which support them well in attempting more challenging tasks. They rapidly master more complex skills at a very early stage. Although pupils show very good informal and formal drawing skills, there is less emphasis on applying the full design process and the use of computers to enhance designing in Years 7 to 9. The work seen of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is of a very high standard and pupils develop advanced skills in both designing and making products within all specialist areas of the subject. They are beginning to use ICT very well to present their portfolio work and to process the data they collect from potential users of their products. Their competence in computer-aided design is increasing rapidly. Although most pupils apply the process of designing very well, they do not always show how their research has influenced their designing. This aspect is analysed and covered in more detail in the graphic products course. All pupils have very good attitudes to their work, and their overall achievement from Years 7 to 11 is very good given their attainment on entry.
129. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In Years 7 to 9, teachers enhance learning by preparing a very good range of interesting and motivating activities, which enable pupils to use both hand and machine tools to make a range of very good quality products. The learning is underpinned with the relevant knowledge and understanding that are strong features of the teaching. However, computer-aided design is underused to enable pupils to modify and test their work at this stage. Teachers provide very good individual support for pupils and foster very good relationships in lessons and this creates a very good climate for learning. Otherwise, too little is done for pupils who have special educational needs because teachers do not adapt the work to suit their individual learning needs. In Years 10 and 11, most pupils develop both design skills and practical making skills very well. Teachers use the examination mark scheme very well to guide pupils through the design process and this ensures a very good structure for learning. As a result, pupils gain very good marks for each section of their coursework. They are disadvantaged, however, in their coursework by limited resources to experience work in computer-aided manufacture.
130. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department has established very good working relationships amongst staff, particularly through a period of staffing difficulties. Standards are rising further. However, pupils do not experience work in food technology and this narrows their learning experience. Marking and assessment are good although there is less emphasis on using National Curriculum levels and as a result, target setting in Years 7 to 9 is not well developed. More use could be made of data analysis to target work more precisely to pupils' individual learning needs, and to evaluate the impact of what is provided in the learning. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and well

above average standards are being maintained. Very good technician support contributes very well to the overall daily organisation of the department.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The focus subjects were art and design and music. Drama was sampled.

131. Three **drama** lessons were observed in which good teaching was seen. Standards in Years 9 and 11 are above average and achievement is good, but with just one lesson each fortnight during Years 7-9, progress is not as good as it might be. Nevertheless teachers work with considerable skill to develop dramatic skills and techniques. A good Year 8 lesson observed on *Commedia del'Arte* was well planned and alongside the teacher's effective use of demonstration led pupils to a good awareness of characterisation and movement.
132. Skills develop with impressive pace during Years 10 and 11. Pupils showed enthusiasm and commitment in a Year 11 lesson, working hard and communicating ideas well. They showed high levels of collaboration and were mutually supportive of each other's ideas.

Art and design

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in three-dimensional and ceramics work are very high.
- Pupils' drawing skills are well above average.
- Assessment does not fully link National Curriculum criteria and levels to all topics in pupil-friendly terms to support self-assessment.

Commentary

133. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 were well above average. In work seen during the inspection, standards in both Year 9 and 11 were well above average. Pupils achieve well throughout Years 7-11. Drawing skills are well developed and these provide a strong foundation for work in other areas. Sketchbooks show that most pupils are able to investigate and research ideas thoroughly. The most able make good progress and some particularly imaginative work was observed. Pupils work confidently in a wide range of different media - drawing, pastels and painting – and the work in three dimensions and ceramics is particularly impressive. However, there are weaknesses in the analysis and annotations of some pupils' GCSE work. Good links are made to the work of established artists and ICT is used effectively to modify images and as a resource in some collage work.
134. Teaching and learning are both good in all years. The most effective teaching is characterised by an enthusiasm and expertise that inspires pupils to achieve well. Lessons are clearly structured with a brief evaluation of progress made at the end of the lesson. Learning objectives are made clear and pupils are supported and given intensive help and encouragement to improve and refine their work. Skills are taught progressively through observation and analysis. In an outstanding Year 7 lesson observed, pupils were given the opportunity to discover exciting images using watercolour, and their delight in their own progress was very clear. The pace of learning was intense and the teacher managed to develop pupils' skills and

imagination very effectively through experimentation and analysis. The use of ICT to support learning is underdeveloped in Years 7 to 9, but is a strength of the provision in GCSE work. Some lower attaining pupils have been identified as underachieving and teachers have responded well by setting short-term targets to motivate and reward these pupils.

135. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has a clear vision for the future, and has taken effective action in response to last year's underachievement at A-level. However, monitoring of teaching and learning is insufficient to ensure greater consistency and the sharing of good practice. Assessment practice is satisfactory but links are not made to National Curriculum criteria and levels. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 sing and play keyboards well.
- Pupils' work in Years 10 and 11 is very good as a result of the teachers' musicianship and very good subject knowledge.
- Pupils enjoy taking part in the many music activities.
- More computers are needed for music technology in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

136. By Year 9 pupils' musical skills are well above average, especially in playing keyboard instruments. This represents very good achievement, as many pupils' experience of music is rudimentary on entry to the school. Overall, pupils' knowledge of composing and performing techniques is developing well and their use of musical vocabulary is good. The group performances of a Japanese song in Year 8 were notable for their quality. Pupils in Year 7 sing well in class and in the junior choir. In a Year 9 class nearly all pupils play well from notation and several can direct ensemble rehearsals with confidence.
137. In 2004, 84 per cent of pupils taking GCSE achieved an A*-C grade, although numbers taking the examination were not enough to make a national comparison valid. Standards are improving, and in work seen attainment was well above average, and pupils' achievements are very good. Year 11 pupils' use of new music technology is very confident and their composing work often shows considerable creative flair. Year 10 pupils perform well individually. Beginner pupils in instrumental lessons are making good progress.
138. Teaching and learning are very good and often excellent. Instrumental teaching is good. Where teaching is excellent, the clarity of teacher expositions and very good use of demonstrations, including contributions from higher attainers with more advanced keyboard skills, help pupils make progress. The musicianship, subject knowledge and high expectations of teachers promote very good learning. Pupils enjoy their lessons and they co-operate well in group work.
139. Leadership is good and motivates pupils to do well. Management is satisfactory and more time is needed to ensure consistency in teaching standards across the department, including instrumental teaching. The curriculum has a strong multi-cultural focus, but assessment for learning is at an early stage of development, especially in relation to the planning of work for individual pupils. There is a shortage of computers to support music technology in Years 7 to 9 and soundproofing is a problem in the present temporary accommodation. Instrumental lessons provide tuition in brass, woodwind, guitar, keyboard, piano, strings and singing, but the numbers of pupils involved are small and lower than national averages. There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities and support for school concerts is strong. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, mainly as result of the hard work of the acting head of music and other staff, which has ensured that the department's standards have been maintained.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Years 9 and 11; pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good; teachers plan lessons using a range of activities that allows all groups of pupils to learn well.
- The inadequate accommodation and poorly drained pitches are considerable constraints on curriculum opportunities.
- The head of department has a strong commitment to improvement and success.

- The very good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning.

Commentary

140. Standards in lessons and in work of Year 9 and Year 11 pupils are above average. Pupils are achieving well across all years, despite the barriers to learning of inadequate accommodation and poorly drained, often unusable pitches. Year 11 pupils' GCSE examination results are consistently well above average; they are broadly in line with their grades in other subjects. High attaining pupils are successful in a range of sports at county, regional and sometimes national levels.
141. The quality of teaching and learning is good across all year groups. Lessons are challenging and teachers' expectations of pupils are demanding, but realistic. Work is planned to suit all pupils. In a Year 11 lesson, lower attaining pupils made good progress, because the teacher modified tasks and used demonstrations very effectively. The learning of higher attaining pupils in the lesson was accelerated by extension tasks and grouping. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to learn independently. In a Year 7 orienteering lesson, pupils planned race routes and evaluated tactics. Learning is less effective in a few lessons when there is less technical input and when teaching becomes more prescriptive. The very good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning. The subject contributes well to the improvement of pupils' numeracy, literacy and ICT skills. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their very positive attitudes. Participation rates are high and relationships very good.
142. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader has a strong commitment to improvement and success and is ably supported by a dedicated team of specialists. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and pupils' standards. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory. The end of Year 9 teachers' assessments, however, are consistently at least a level too high. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The department works hard to minimize the effects of unsatisfactory accommodation and the often poor state of the pitches. Improvement, overall, since the last inspection has been good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Provision in business studies is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching styles are too narrow and do not provide sufficient learning opportunities.
- There is insufficient pace and rigour in many lessons.
- There are insufficient strategies for improvement because of inadequate leadership.
- Expectations of pupils' achievement are too low.
- Industrial partners provide good direct experience of business for Year 10.
- Assessment is poor and is insufficient for pupils' improvement.

Commentary

143. GCSE results in 2004 were above the national average, however most pupils gained a C grade with very few achieving A* or A grades. Twenty per cent did not achieve an A*

to C grade, and the less able pupils in particular underachieved. From the work scrutiny and lessons observed, current standards in Year 11 are average. Much of the work seen lacks organisation and depth; there are many gaps that are not systematically followed up. The written work does not form an effective basis for learning and as a result pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.

144. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. There is insufficient planning and as a result much of the teaching is dull and fails to capture the pupils' interest. Teachers talk too long and there are a very limited range of different strategies to support pupils' learning. The teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement are generally too low and lead to insufficient challenge, particularly for the above average pupils. Many pupils therefore go off task because of the slow pace of learning; their involvement and interest are limited. There is too much reliance on the textbook with insufficient additional stimulus materials. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are unsatisfactory where teaching is unsatisfactory, but they respond more positively in other lessons. There is insufficient homework and the marking is not rigorous enough. Pupils are uncertain of how to improve their work because the assessment systems are poor and lack the means to systematically identify and remedy underachievement. Although there is under-performance in the majority of the course, pupils' course work is carefully planned and organised and this results in achievement that is markedly better than that in the examinations.
145. Leadership and management of business studies are unsatisfactory. Priorities for improvement have not been established, nor the suggestions of the recent local education authority survey acted upon. The head of department is also a head of year and has insufficient time to effectively lead the department. As a result there are no schemes of work, the monitoring and evaluation of data lacks rigour, there are few departmental records and the staff meet together infrequently. There is also insufficient monitoring and support for the department at whole school level. There is a good programme of industrial and commercial support that provides an effective module in Year 10. The current accommodation is unsatisfactory as it lacks any business ethos and there is no access to ICT, which limits the opportunities for individual investigation. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory as standards of teaching, leadership and achievement have all declined.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship was sampled. It was not possible to observe specific citizenship lessons, as there were no timetabled lessons during the inspection. However it was possible to have discussions with pupils, a review of the schemes of work and a discussion with the co-ordinator.

146. Standards are above average in Years 9 and 11. Year 9 pupils are well informed about their rights and responsibilities in society and show good understanding of criminal and legal systems. They have clearly benefited from informative talks by local police and magistrates. In geography lessons they are able to talk with understanding and concern about the exploitation of factory workers in less economically developed countries. Year 11 pupils develop their knowledge of the rights of consumers, employers and employees through their work experience opportunities. Many are able to discuss different political systems and compare democracies with communist states.
147. Two Year 7 mathematics lessons that had predominantly citizenship objectives were observed. Good teaching enabled pupils to explore ways in which the government

collects information through the census and to discuss different possible interpretations of the resulting data. Very good planning ensured that pupils were directed efficiently to possible sources of information in books and on the Internet. Pupils respond very positively to such opportunities and most are able to work well, independently and cooperatively. However, in these and other lessons where teachers address citizenship issues, they do not share the citizenship objectives with pupils. As a result, pupils are unsure what they are expected to achieve in the subject. Attainment and progress are not assessed.

148. A full audit of opportunities to teach citizenship through other subjects has led to the identification of a good range of units of work that enrich the core programme in PSHE. These provide good opportunities for pupils to become better informed citizens and develop skills of enquiry and communication. However, there are relatively few opportunities for all pupils to develop skills of participation and responsible action. All pupils are involved in the election of the school council and can contribute their views through elected representatives, but few show much enthusiasm for this, especially in Years 10 and 11. Several pupils have trained as counsellors and provide a successful peer group support programme known in the school as "Fusion". Such opportunities for involvement in the school and local community have not yet been coordinated to form a coherent programme for this strand of citizenship.

149. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The previous coordinator has established a firm base for the subject. However, the current head of department is new in post this term and has not yet been given sufficient time to monitor current provision or introduce further developments.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	3	66.7	78.3	0.0	21.6	20.0	28.5
Biology	16	87.5	63.5	12.5	10.4	26.9	19.8
Business studies	7	100.0	75.3	28.6	15.4	41.4	25.7
Chemistry	3	100.0	70.3	33.3	13.2	40.0	23.0
Drama	2	100.0	86.6	0.0	19.8	40.0	30.9
Economics	2	100.0	71.6	0.0	18.6	40.0	25.8
English Language	2	100.0	85.3	50.0	16.1	45.0	29.0
English Literature	12	100.0	86.2	16.7	17.4	32.5	29.7
French	3	100.0	79.8	0.0	19.4	23.3	28.2
General studies	8	100.0	73.6	87.5	16.9	53.8	25.5

Geography	1	100.0	75.5	0.0	20.4	30.0	27.0
History	4	100.0	82.2	25.0	20.8	40.0	29.2
Information Technology	6	100.0	66.6	0.0	8.8	26.7	20.6
Mathematics	11	81.8	59.9	9.1	14.1	30.9	20.5
Music	2	100.0	79.8	50.0	16.9	40.0	27.5
Physics	6	66.7	66.4	0.0	14.8	16.7	22.4
Sociology	7	100.0	72.1	28.6	19.6	37.1	25.9
Spanish	1	100.0	77.1	0.0	17.0	20.0	26.5
PE/Sports Studies	2	100.0	72.2	0.0	11.8	30.0	22.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	12	83.3	98.3	0.0	50.2	53.3	87.1
Biology	33	97.0	96.6	36.4	40.0	73.3	79.3
Business studies	21	100.0	98.9	47.6	39.4	84.8	81.8
Chemistry	8	100.0	97.7	37.5	50.0	80.0	85.7
Communication Studies	1	100.0	99.2	0.0	40.4	80.0	83.5
Drama	4	100.0	99.6	50.0	42.8	95.0	85.1
Economics	8	100.0	98.8	50.0	54.3	85.0	89.8
English Language	6	100.0	99.2	66.7	36.4	93.3	81.1
English Literature	16	100.0	99.4	68.8	44.9	98.8	85.5
French	2	100.0	99.0	100.0	53.1	120.0	88.9
Design and technology	17	100.0	97.8	52.9	35.0	83.5	77.9
General studies	95	95.8	94.9	38.9	30.5	78.9	72.9
Geography	13	100.0	98.8	61.5	46.4	92.3	85.2
History	36	100.0	99.0	52.8	45.6	87.2	85.1
Information technology	9	100.0	96.3	22.2	25.7	77.8	71.1
Mathematics	30	96.7	96.8	56.7	56.6	94.7	89.5
Music	4	100.0	98.2	25.0	37.1	70.0	79.5
Physics	29	93.1	96.7	51.7	45.3	81.4	82.6
Sociology	32	100.0	98.5	71.9	45.3	96.3	84.6
Spanish	4	100.0	98.2	25.0	53.5	85.0	88.7
Sports/PE studies	27	100.0	97.8	33.3	30.9	82.2	75.4

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French were inspected in detail. Spanish was sampled.

150. In the Year 12 **Spanish** lesson seen, good teaching ensured students achieved well. They began the lesson with confident presentations about past holidays and were then able to respond to a complex and authentic listening task. The teacher ensured the lesson was lively and pupils acquired new language rapidly, moving on from holidays to more complex issues about tourism in Spain. The homework set both consolidated new language and encouraged independent research.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning lead to well above average standards.
- Student achievement is very good, especially in English literature examinations.
- There is very good leadership and management of a team of well-qualified and experienced teachers.
- Students are offered a good range of courses and opportunities beyond the classroom.

Commentary

151. Standards in English are well above average. Attainment in AS and A2 English literature and language examinations is well above average. Standards seen are also well above average. Students write analytically, read widely, and make very good use of independent study skills. The standard of creative writing on the English language course is very high. Student achievement is very good. High attaining students are reaching their potential and achieving the highest grades. No student has achieved less than a grade D in the last two years.

152. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and share this enthusiastically. There is a high level of challenge in lessons and teachers question skilfully and probingly, drawing out students' understanding. Teachers have high expectations of students' independent research and study skills. They provide essential background reading to establish the contextual background of an author, for example establishing the social and historical background to William Blake's poetry. They also have high expectations that students will read widely and present their ideas coherently to the rest of the class. Consequently every student in a Year 12 class could clearly demonstrate the inter-relationship and importance of the themes of magic, scientific development and religion in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Students are given very good guidance and support; teachers' marking is very detailed and helpful; lessons are closely related to the examination assessment objectives.

153. Leadership and management are very good. The subject is taught by a team of experienced and well-qualified teachers who are given regular opportunities for professional development and to keep abreast of changing examination requirements. The English department offers students a varied choice of advanced level courses including English literature, English language and media studies. They also provide a number of opportunities for enrichment including theatre visits and lectures and

seminars with students from other schools. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

154. Standards of language and literacy are well above average in all subjects. Students can present their ideas with increasing clarity, accuracy and confidence in speaking and when writing. They make good use of study skills, reading independently and critically.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide good models for students' own language.
- Students are motivated and work well independently.
- Student numbers are very low.
- Teachers' planning and schemes of work do not support linguistic and skill progression.

Commentary

155. In 2004, students' A-level French examination results were as predicted but numbers were too small for national comparison.

156. Standards seen during the inspection are above average and students' achievement is satisfactory. In Year 13 students are able to understand a range of complex issues in French and express opinions. Higher attaining students speak at length although not always accurately. Other students are less confident, but communicate opinions and reasons clearly. Students can write at length and have made good progress in coursework tasks. They listen and respond well to rapid authentic French. Scrutiny of work showed that students write extended essays accurately, with a range of structures, and have good reading and independent research skills. In Year 12, students are already able to express themselves accurately when taking part in AS speaking tasks, although they are sometimes reliant on written support for these.

157. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory. Teachers provide good models of French so that students' pronunciation and language are above average. However, the use of French in lessons is inconsistent, so that students do not always respond in French themselves. The range of authentic texts, including those from ICT sources, ensures that students gain a good knowledge of social and cultural issues in France and the French-speaking world. The range of topics is interesting to students and ensures that students are well motivated and very positive about their language learning. Teachers provide good opportunities for independent learning through weekly research and reporting tasks that the students choose themselves. However the pace of lessons is sometimes too slow as a result of spending too long on similar tasks and planning does not show how language and skills are developed through the topics covered. Students have limited opportunities to work collaboratively as lessons are often very teacher directed. Marking is thorough, giving students a clear direction on how to improve, and the use of examination assessment criteria helps students know how well they are doing.

158. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and teachers work effectively together so that the A-level topics and examination skills are covered and students are clear about what they are doing. However, the schemes of work and consequently teachers' planning are not sufficiently developed to support linguistic and skill progression within the topics studied. There are no strategies in place to increase the uptake of French in the sixth form.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the subject is very good.
- Teachers have a very good command of their subject.
- The courses are carefully organised to take advantage of students' individual strengths.
- Students have a wide range of prior attainment at GCSE level, but overall standards are consistently above average.
- There is consistently good take-up for the subject.

Commentary

159. Students starting the mathematics A-level course in Year 12 have a wide range of prior attainment at GCSE level. Results at both AS and A level in 2004 were well above average. In work seen, standards in the current Years 12 and 13 are well above average, and students' achievements are very good. A small but increasing number of students also take further mathematics; they obtain a high proportion of A and B grades. In the last four years, almost all students who have taken mathematics examinations in the sixth form obtained a grade.
160. Results at both AS and A level in 2004 indicate students' achievements in the sixth form to be very good given their attainment at the start of the course. Standards at AS level were also well above average. A small but increasing number of students also take further mathematics; they obtain a high proportion of A and B grades.
161. In work seen during the inspection, overall standards were also well above average. Students are very involved in their work; most of them make a good contribution to lessons, readily asking for further explanation when they do not fully understand. They take pride in the presentation of their work, and show how they arrive at their answers. Students comment positively on the organisation of the courses, and on their teachers' planning of work. Students are clearly expected to work hard, and to complete their work on time. There is good take-up for the subject, including an increasing number of students with B grades at GCSE. Retention rates are high in mathematics, but lower in further mathematics.
162. The quality of teaching is very good overall. A large number of teachers take AS/A level classes, and they have a good command of their subject. The planning of the content of lessons is excellent, but less attention is given to providing variety in the methods of teaching. Nevertheless, teachers gain a positive response from students, and the level of concentration is very high. Relationships are generally very good, resulting in a very good working atmosphere in most lessons. There is excellent progression in the work. In the best lessons, provision is made for the wide range of attainment by differentiating the work for higher and lower attaining students. Assessments of students' standards are regular; results are compared with target grades, so that any underachievement is quickly identified and overcome. Students have opportunities to contribute in class, and this helps to develop their communication skills. However, keywords are not regularly consolidated at the end of lessons. There is

very effective use of the new whiteboards, and occasional use of computers to extend learning opportunities.

163. Leadership and management of the subject are very good, developing very good teamwork. There is detailed analysis of examination standards and trends in order to identify strengths in provision, as well as areas requiring attention. Teachers are mutually supportive, and their flexibility has helped the school to overcome recent recruitment difficulties. However, lesson observations have not as yet helped to broaden the range of teaching methods. The quality of the accommodation, and of resources such as textbooks, is very good. Since the previous inspection, the department has made good progress.

Mathematics across the curriculum

164. The sixth form curriculum does not contain courses in key skills, or provide lessons for students not taking AS/A-level mathematics to improve or consolidate their mathematical skills. There is also no monitoring of the mathematical needs of students in subjects such as the sciences, geography, and business studies, to ensure that they can benefit fully from the courses provided; for instance in the use of calculations, and in the analysis of data.
165. In spite of these omissions, observations across the curriculum during the inspection indicated that students were generally able to cope with the mathematical aspects of their work.

SCIENCE

The main inspection focus was on biology, but chemistry and physics were sampled.

166. Teaching was observed to be good in **physics** and very good in **chemistry**. Standards are above average in both subjects and each recruits a high number of sixth-formers. Until recently, the number of students opting for AS chemistry has always been well below the numbers for biology and physics. However, last year changes were made to the way chemistry was taught and assessed at GCSE and this led to a threefold increase in the number choosing AS chemistry.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievements are good.
- Good teaching and positive attitudes from students help them to achieve well.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- There is insufficient practical work in Year 12 due to large group sizes and the shortness of time.
- Laboratory accommodation is inadequate and some lessons take place in classrooms.

Commentary

167. Biology is the most popular sixth-form subject in the school and recruits a large number of students covering a wide ability range. The department has a generous recruitment policy where borderline students are often allowed to start the AS course and continue from AS to A2. In 2004, results in the AS and A-level examinations were in line with national averages and

the majority of students exceeded the grades predicted for them based on their attainment at GCSE. Work in the current Year 12 and 13 is above average and students' achievements are good.

168. Teaching is consistently good and sometimes very good. Teachers are enthusiastic and conduct lessons at a brisk pace. They plan lessons carefully to ensure that students are always kept interested. In a Year 13 lesson for example, the interest of the students was quickly captured by a simple "loop quiz". This reinforced their previously acquired knowledge and formed a good foundation for the new work – the structure and histology of the pancreas. Teachers frequently make good use of ICT to enhance students' learning. For example, the video 'flexi-cam' is used to show enlarged images of microscope slides and computer animations; PowerPoint presentations are used to illustrate difficult concepts to students. The progress of students is monitored carefully; module tests are regularly set and marked with the students using the mark-schemes produced by the examination awarding body. This gives students a clear idea of how they can improve their work. The time allocation for biology in Year 12 is just nine periods per fortnight and this makes it difficult for teachers to fully cover the content of the AS specification. As a result, time for practical work is very restricted and students feel inadequately prepared for the AS practical examination.
169. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has a clear vision for improvement and has created an effective team of professionals keen to make a difference. There are good procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Despite some improvements to the science accommodation over recent years there is still an insufficient number of laboratories and some biology lessons take place in a classroom, adversely affecting the opportunities for practical work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Computing

The provision for computing is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers employ a high level of expertise and provide students with good individual advice during lessons.
- Assessment is not used effectively to support learning.

Commentary

170. Standards reached in A-level examinations in 2004 were above average but judging by the students' previous performance they did not achieve as well as predicted. There has been a small improvement since standards fell to a low in 2001, following the previous inspection when they were well above average.
171. Current standards in Year 13 are average. Students started the examination course with GCSE standards similar to those with which most students begin a course of this type. However, their experience lower down the school was varied and some had not previously taken an ICT examination in Year 11. Achievement is satisfactory and has been limited in the past by staffing problems. Current standards in Year 12 are above average and students are now making better progress. They have a broader understanding of computers and networks and are more used to taking responsibility for their own learning.

172. Teaching is satisfactory overall and a very good lesson was seen during the inspection. Teachers have a very good understanding of this very technical subject and of the course requirements. They enjoy good relationships with the students and there is a relaxed and businesslike atmosphere in lessons. Good online links enable students to gain access to resources and in the best lessons, students use these to check their progress against the examination board's criteria and mark scheme. In this way they can easily see where they are doing well or what they need to do to improve. However, the system of assessment, similar to that used in the main school, does not provide students with individual targets or the teacher with an aid to planning lessons. In some lessons, the teacher had clearly not taken into account gaps in the students' knowledge. In others, the lessons are too teacher led, not allowing the students to undertake research or improve their presentation skills. Lessons are usually challenging and the students become deeply involved in complex tasks, such as planning a program in 'Visual Basic' or designing an information system. In these instances, teachers are able to advise and encourage the students individually. They are helped by the students' well above average skills in literacy and numeracy. These are well developed on the computing course although there are too few opportunities for students to address the whole group. Gifted students are encouraged to experiment and broaden their knowledge but, as a rule, teaching does not encourage students to take enough responsibility for their own learning, for example in planning out their own work schedule based on targets.
173. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The newly appointed leader is committed and enthusiastic and keen to implement improvements. He has been able to take on an existing course and rebuild student confidence after previous staffing problems. He has overseen and managed good improvements to the accommodation and resources, which have increased the students' access to workstations and software. The department is not yet analysing data effectively to provide information for future planning and to track the progress of individual students. Although standards were higher at the time of the previous inspection there are clear signs that they are now improving. Access to resources has increased and, overall, improvement is satisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

174. The sixth form students' competence in ICT is above average. About a third of the students took a GCSE examination in ICT but the experience of the other students in Years 10 and 11 was varied and they received limited instruction. However, many students have computers at home and all they are confident users of the types of software they use on A-level courses and of those they will meet in later stages of education and employment. All use the Internet for research and can search and sort and identify valid information.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was history and sociology. Geography was sampled.

175. In the Year 13 **geography** lesson seen, teaching was very good with excellent involvement of all the students in the highly effective questioning, which made considerable demands on the students' understanding. The pace was fast; the challenge was considerable and as a result the achievement was very good. This was

a highly effective lesson, energetically led by the teacher with very well motivated students clearly enjoying the challenge of studying urban regeneration.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved to well above average and students achieve very well.
- Very good teaching ensures students make very good progress.
- The students' very positive attitudes to their work help them to learn very well.
- Very good leadership gives a clear direction to the subject.

Commentary

176. Examination results at A-level were above the national average. This has been due to close monitoring of students' progress and an emphasis on developing students' learning skills, especially critical enquiry and analysis. In work seen, standards in Years 12 and 13 are well above average and students achieve very well.
177. Both Year 12 and 13 students have a very good knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of the periods under study. Students articulate ideas well and are ready to challenge each other and even the teacher in putting forward their views with conviction and evidence. Coursework and essays are very well researched, especially by the most able students, who use very good skills of enquiry, analysis and mature essay construction to write well-balanced accounts, often with reference to the views of different historians. These skills are being effectively developed in students of other abilities as a result of rigorous monitoring of writing techniques by the teachers. Some students, especially in Year 12, show less understanding and awareness of different views when making presentations to the class and in their written work.
178. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to thoroughly plan a variety of tasks and to challenge students to think for themselves through sharp questioning. There are opportunities for students to study by themselves on challenging enquiries, which are developing their skills of critical analysis and independent thought. The very thorough marking and target setting for improvement also promote their progress. Teachers benefit considerably from students' strong motivation and excellent attitudes to learning, which enable them to teach very effectively. Students feel well supported as a result of the extra classes and regular, individual feedback provided on their progress. This produces very good working relationships in the classroom and an atmosphere where students are ready to participate in discussion. Nearly all teachers use rigorous questioning to make students defend their opinions or invite challenges from others.
179. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department provides very clear vision and direction. She is a very good role model, setting high standards of teaching and expectations of pupils. Examination results are thoroughly analysed and positively responded to, especially in closely monitoring students' progress and revising the coursework topics. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good so that history is now one of the most popular and successful subjects in the

sixth form. The team of experienced teachers is committed to improvement and works well together.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are well above the national average, and students achieve grades that are well above their predictions.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers use their excellent knowledge of the subject to plan lessons that challenge and motivate students to reach high standards.
- The very good subject leadership has helped make this a popular subject.
- ICT is not effectively used in teaching.

Commentary

180. Both AS and A-level results were well above the national average in 2004 with a high proportion of students obtaining higher grades. Value added information indicates that students achieve better grades than their predictions, especially those with relatively weaker GCSE grades. Over the last few years there has been a steady improvement in examination results and in the numbers taking the subject.

181. Standards in work seen in both Years 12 and 13 are also well above average and students are achieving very well. Students have a very good knowledge and understanding of underlying principles and traditions and are able to make use of specialist language well. They have a very good grasp of research methodology and confidently assess the value of different types of evidence to compare and contrast various theories. Written work is very well prepared, showing good independent learning skills. They are keen to apply their knowledge to current situations and to critically approach issues such as crime and deviance. Most Year 12 students are achieving very well and are on target for grades that will exceed predictions. A few find the work hard but nevertheless with good mentoring achieve commendable grades. Last year a significant proportion of students chose not to follow the course through to Year 13 because of the workload but did nevertheless achieve good AS results. Year 13 students are achieving very well. Their ability to use the information they have gained in essays, discussions and when leading seminars is commendable. All are on target for high grades.

182. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject and use a wide variety of teaching and learning methods to inform and challenge pupils. Relationships are positive, and there is a very strong sense of working together. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and as a result they carry out thorough research, presenting their findings well. They confidently apply their knowledge and understanding to current events. Assessment and mentoring are very good with students receiving very good feedback and advice on how to improve their work. Limited use is made of ICT in teaching, and students do not always prepare seminars in the most concise and accessible way.

183. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear sense of purpose and direction and a strong team spirit with commitment to improving the subject. Results are carefully analysed and steps taken to ensure that the information is used well in evaluation and planning for the future. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was product design but design and technology (resistant materials) was sampled.

184. Standards in **resistant materials** at A-level are well above average. Teaching in the one lesson observed was inspiring and led to very good learning. Students' knowledge is underpinned with relevant practical skills that are related to industrial practices.

Product design

Provision in product design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in both AS-level and A-level courses.
- Students show very good attitudes and are independent in the way they work.
- Very good relationships create very good conditions for learning.
- Resources to support pupils' experience in computer-aided design are limited.

Commentary

185. A-level results in 2004 were well above average. Standards of work seen are also well above average for this stage in the course. Students are achieving very well. In their work students show the development of their ideas with detailed explanations and annotation at each stage. Work is very well presented and ICT is used very effectively particularly to experience more industrial based development techniques. Consideration is given to both standard production and mass production systems. Although the best use is made of available resources, the school does not have sufficient up-to-date resources to enable students to use computer-aided manufacturing processes easily. As a result, students are disadvantaged with their coursework. Students work very well independently, using teachers mainly as a support and guide.

186. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and one excellent graphic products lesson was seen during the inspection. Teachers have a high degree of specialist subject knowledge as well as knowledge of the examination requirements, which ensures students are fully prepared for the tasks and impacts very well on learning. Teachers guide students through each stage of the examination mark scheme, encouraging them to work in great depth and to use their initiative and imagination to demonstrate more advanced and highly polished skills in their work. Teachers focus on individual achievement and support pupils very well. Lessons are very well structured, with a very good mix of whole group activities and opportunities for students to work independently. Students are often required to present their ideas and findings to the whole group. The quality of work is high and students develop products in a broad range of contexts. Teachers set very clear objectives for lessons and work is very well matched to students' individual learning needs. Teachers support students very well and extend their basic knowledge and skills by using a very good range of materials and processes. Work is marked regularly and teachers provide helpful comments for students on how to improve further. Very good relationships in the classroom create a very positive climate for learning. As a result students are confident to discuss their work in depth with their teachers.

187. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Well above average standards in product design have been maintained and standards in Year 12 are improving further. Systems to monitor the achievement of students are in place. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on music and music technology. Media studies, drama and art and design were sampled.

188. One Year 12 AS-level **media studies** lesson was sampled. Standards were well above average and teaching and learning were very good. Students were able to work independently producing short films and newspapers of near professional quality. They had carefully researched their target audience and chosen genres, and had prepared very thoughtful commentaries showing a high degree of critical self-evaluation.
189. In **art and design**, the poor results in 2004 are not typical of results over time, and the department has carefully analysed the reasons for the dip and is taking clear action to avoid a repetition. In the one Year 13 lesson observed, students were fully involved in their work, and were able to talk about it fluently and with understanding. Some very imaginative work was seen as a result of very good teaching.
190. In **drama**, students demonstrated deep commitment to their work and had developed appropriate skills in the one Year 12 lesson observed. Those students acting as an audience for a devised piece showed astute observation and analysis skills that helped the performers to develop their work. Teaching and learning were good.

Music and music technology

Provision in music and music technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of the very good subject knowledge of the teachers.
- Students have positive attitudes and are confident individual learners.
- There are few opportunities for students to take part in workshops with professional musicians.

Commentary

191. Results were close to national averages in 2004 for both AS and A-level examinations, although more capable students have yet to achieve the very highest grades. However numbers in examination groups are small and national comparisons are not entirely valid. Standards in work seen are above average and students are achieving well. A few students show a real aptitude for composing and arranging, exploring instrumental colours and texture with confidence. Students' oral contributions in lessons are good with a few demonstrating a commendable depth of thinking and intellectual enquiry, as in the lesson on ornamentation in baroque music. All students have a good knowledge of compositional techniques, and in the music technology classes, students make analogue and digital recordings and fluently use notational and sequencing software. Students perform and improvise together well but opportunities for students to work with professional musicians and gain first-hand experience of the music profession are limited.
192. Teaching is good overall and in some lessons is very good. Students benefit from the specialist music technology teaching available. The well-structured lessons and very good subject knowledge of the teachers help students to understand what is required

in the examinations and to make progress. These highly-motivated students value their very good access to computers and recording equipment, and the very good teacher to student relationships help to create an informal but hard-working atmosphere for learning.

193. Leadership and management are good, making effective use of the limited facilities available. The priorities for the department have been well established and include the improvement of examination results as well as developing students' all-round musicianship. Further improvements should follow as a result of the forthcoming move to purpose-built accommodation in September 2005 but improvement to standards since the last inspection has been good and is a tribute to the hard work of the music staff.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results are consistently above the national average, and students' achievements are good.
- Teaching is very good and meets individual needs very well; learning is enhanced by the very good use of ICT.
- The inadequate accommodation and poorly drained pitches limit curriculum opportunities.
- Sixth form students have the opportunity to participate in timetabled sport.
- There are no opportunities for students to participate on sports leadership award courses.

Commentary

194. A-level results in 2004 were above the national average and represented good achievement from students' earlier attainment. The proportion of students gaining an A or B grade in both the AS and A2 examinations is consistently above average. High attaining students perform very well in a range of sports at county, national and sometimes international levels.
195. Standards of work seen by Year 12 students, and those in Year 13 who have continued with the course, are above average and show good improvement from their attainment on entry to the sixth form; most students are achieving well. Students have a good understanding of the main concepts and theories; they handle numerical data very well and most show good extended writing skills. Students research work well and use good technical language. They make very good use of ICT to enhance both their learning and presentation skills.
196. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall; in some lessons it is very good. Teachers show wide subject knowledge and are aware of how students learn; they work hard to use methods and resources that meet their needs. In a Year 13 theory lesson the teacher used PowerPoint presentation and research tasks to improve students' knowledge of ergogenic aids. Students organize their files well and there is

very good evidence of independent research using the Internet, library and other sources. Students are appreciative of the support that they receive; the overall monitoring and mentoring of students is good. Teachers' expectations are high and students respond very positively; retention rates for the course are good. Students' written assignments are marked regularly and teachers' good diagnostic comments ensure that students know how to improve.

197. The quality of leadership and management is good. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and standards. Students are timetabled for recreational sport and many take advantage of this. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The inadequate accommodation and poorly drained pitches remain constraints to curriculum opportunities.

BUSINESS

The focus was on business studies, but economics was sampled.

198. Teaching in the Year 13 **economics** lesson seen was satisfactory with a clear but lengthy introduction by the teacher. One student effectively developed a supply and demand graph on the board and this generated satisfactory discussion. Students' attitudes to economics are good. Overall the lesson planning did not provide for a wide range of learning opportunities; the students' achievement was satisfactory.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a good command of the subject and relevant experience.
- Insufficient use is made of performance data for raising achievement.
- The coursework is managed effectively.
- There are insufficient assessment opportunities for target setting.
- Weak lesson planning leads to insufficient pace and challenge in some lessons.
- The Young Enterprise scheme provides good business experience through the company scheme.

Commentary

199. A-level results in 2004 were above average and an improvement on the previous year, with nearly half of the students securing A or B grades. This indicates satisfactory achievement. Over the last three years achievement has been satisfactory. AS results were average and given the entry level of the students also indicated satisfactory achievement. In work seen, standards in both Year 12 and Year 13 are average and students are achieving satisfactorily.

200. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. All teachers have a good command and understanding of the subject and two have business experience. There are good homework opportunities for students to follow up their own research and the work scrutiny indicates that students develop satisfactory independent study skills. These are clearly indicated in the coursework, which is well managed and enables the students to achieve well in this part of the course. Overall students work effectively with others and have satisfactory attitudes towards business studies. Some lessons,

however, are insufficiently planned and although there are good opportunities for all students to discuss issues, much of the debate lacks rigour and pace and consequently not all learning tasks are completed. In other lessons, students listen patiently to over-long introductions before beginning their own research. Assessment procedures are inadequate as there is no coherence across the teaching team. Although work is marked carefully with some advice for improvement, it does not provide sufficient guidance for all students to develop a good understanding of what skills and knowledge they need to acquire in order to improve. The lack of departmental records makes it difficult to monitor progress and to take full notice of areas of concern.

201. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There are good links with industry as all students have the opportunity to visit a company, on a regular basis, through the Young Enterprise scheme. Although the school produces good performance data, it is not used sufficiently within the department to analyse the progress of individual students and to review, revise and enhance both teaching and learning methodologies.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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