

INSPECTION REPORT

THE JOHN FISHER SCHOOL

PURLEY

LEA area: SUTTON

Unique reference number: 103009

Headteacher: Mr Robin Gregory

Lead inspector: Barbara Hilton

Dates of inspection: 15 - 18 November 2004

Inspection number: 268970

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Male
Number on roll:	1007
School address:	Peaks Hill Purley
Postcode:	CR8 3YP
Telephone number:	020 8660 4555
Fax number:	020 8763 1837
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Andrew Campbell
Date of previous inspection:	16 November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The John Fisher School is a voluntary-aided Roman Catholic School for boys, with sports college status, in the borough of Sutton and the Catholic diocese of Southwark. The school is average in size (1007 pupils, including 214 in the sixth form). All are Catholic in the main school. The attainment of pupils on entry is a little above average but with few of very high or low ability. The school works alongside local grammar schools. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and with statements are below average. Most pupils with the higher levels of needs have specific learning disabilities (dyslexia) or speech and communication difficulties. While no pupil is at an early stage of learning English, about five per cent have a home language other than English. The proportion eligible for free school meals is well below average, at 3.2 per cent. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, at 25 per cent, is below average for outer London. They come from European, Asian, Caribbean and African backgrounds, with no predominant group represented. The school is popular and over-subscribed, and mobility is low. Pupils come from homes across a wide area from Surrey to inner London, which greatly exceeds the affluent area in which the school is sited. About 70 per cent of pupils come from the borough of Croydon, which borders the school. The sixth form has grown in recent years and is a little larger than most, nationally. A few students (in 2004, 15) join newly in Year 12, attracted by the school's reputation in sports and the general sixth form provision. Overall, the composition of the sixth form is similar to the community in the main school. Sixth form opportunities are extended through collaboration with neighbouring girls' schools. The school's high results have been rewarded by the School Achievement Award in successive years.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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31218	Tom Allen	Team inspector	Geography
8216	Geoffrey Binks	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
10984	Pamela Bishop	Team inspector	Science Biology in the sixth form
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
27240	William Hooper	Team inspector	Latin Classical civilisation Citizenship
20527	Brian King	Team inspector	Mathematics
1782	Andrew Lyons	Team inspector	Design and technology
17556	Michael Miller	Team inspector	Art
15576	David Nebesnuick	Team inspector	Business studies Economics
23030	Caroline Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education
1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	Work related learning Special educational needs
1995	Kate Seager	Team inspector	French German
18604	Joy Stopher	Team inspector	Music
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The John Fisher School is a good school, with very good features. Leadership by the head-teacher is very good, involving all in developing the very positive ethos of the school, in line with its mission. Teaching, learning and achievement are good. Standards are above average and results consistently high in the main school. The school is well managed. **Value for money is good.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Results are high at the end of Year 9 and GCSE, in response to good teaching and learning
- Standards and achievement are well above average in English, business and physical education
- Relationships are excellent because the ethos is strongly positive
- Sports college developments and enrichment activities, particularly in sports and music, contribute very strongly to cultivating very good attitudes and striving for high standards
- Lack of rigour in monitoring has perpetuated weaknesses in the curriculum
- Teachers do not fully exploit assessment data to plan challenging lessons for all pupils
- Pupils with special educational needs are known well and achieve very well at GCSE
- Sixth form students respond excellently to opportunities provided, develop maturity and contribute well to the school community

The main school has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection. Teaching and learning are better. Results are improving throughout. The school has acquired sports college status and maintained outstanding strengths in sports and choral music. However, relatively slow progress has been made on issues of the last inspection in design and technology, art and ICT across the curriculum. Matters concerning health and safety are resolved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	C
Year 13	A/AS level examinations	C	C	C	

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

Results at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science are consistently well above the national average and are improving faster than nationally. They reflect very good achievement from pupils' standards on entry, which are just a little above average. Pupils build satisfactorily on this very good foundation. GCSE results overall and in English, mathematics and science are well above those of all schools nationally and even better when compared with boys' schools. They are improving in line with the national trend. Compared with other schools working alongside grammar schools, results are very high both in Year 9 and at GCSE.

In lessons, **standards and achievement are above average overall** and well above average in English, business studies and physical education in the main school. In music, choral music is outstanding but GCSE results are just average. Achievement in ICT lessons is good and standards match those nationally but not enough use is made of ICT across the curriculum, where standards are unsatisfactory. In design and technology in Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve very well, making up for their unsatisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9. Pupils are helped to achieve well because their standards of literacy are well above, and numeracy skills above, average. Pupils with special

educational needs progress well at first and then move quickly up to GCSE as their reading and writing skills improve. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English but some are fluent in English alongside their home language, and they achieve as well as others. Initiatives have started for the gifted and able but in lessons they achieved as well as others in their classes. Students achieve well in the sixth form. Results in AS and A2 levels have been in line with the national average up to 2003. In 2004, results improved in virtually all subjects, and overall. Results in the BTEC National Diploma in sports science are good.

Pupils' attitudes, attendance, punctuality and behaviour are very good overall. Relationships are excellent. **Pupils' personal (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) development is very good.** The emphasis on universal Christian values develops a strongly positive ethos. In a few lessons in Years 9 and 11 behaviour is unsatisfactory, mainly because activities lack challenge.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. Pupils learn systematically because teachers are expert in their subjects and use their knowledge well. By Year 11 most have developed the skills and capacity to work independently and collaboratively. Marking and assessment are effective overall. Teachers have good records of students' progress. Many teachers, however, do not fully exploit this information in plans to challenge individuals, including the more able. Pupils have little knowledge of how they are progressing relative to national standards until the end of Year 9.

The curriculum is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Extra-curricular activities are extensive, especially in sports and choral music. These promote excellence and are a source of pride throughout the school. The traditional academic curriculum is of good quality and enables all, including pupils with special educational needs, to progress well. The school is gradually extending opportunities in Years 10 and 11 and work related learning has been satisfactorily introduced. Several weaknesses indicate a lack of rigour in monitoring. These affect design and technology, mainly because of shortage of time in Years 7 to 9; art, where there is not enough emphasis on creative aspects; and ICT where not enough use is made of ICT in many subjects. **The care, welfare and pastoral support given to pupils are good.** Systematic tracking of pupils' progress and advice and guidance for them to improve their work are satisfactory. **Partnership with parents is very good. Partnership with the wider community is good overall.** Links with the Church, the sports community and through choral music are very productive.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are effective. Leadership by the headteacher and senior managers is very good. Commitment to inclusion and the progress of individuals underpins pupils' very good personal development. Good strategic planning supports management. Sports college status builds on an established strength. Monitoring of the work of the school is carefully documented and arrangements are very systematic. Results are scrutinised effectively. However, the monitoring of curricular plans and classroom practice is too broad-brush and misses detail. **Governance is satisfactory overall.** Governors are very supportive of the school but have not sufficiently held the school to account in several aspects of its work, including in the provision and resourcing of design and technology, and practice in art and ICT across the curriculum.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the school and pupils are proud to attend. They overwhelmingly agree that the school and teaching are good. Concerns pupils express are about bullying and behaviour, and the care and support they receive. Inspectors found no evidence of bullying or of much unsatisfactory behaviour. Care and support are good.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Monitor more rigorously the curriculum and classroom practice
- Make better use of assessment information to plan challenging lessons for all pupils

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- improve provision in design and technology, art and the use of ICT across the curriculum.

THE SIXTH FORM AT THE JOHN FISHER SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is good and effective. Students achieve well. Overall results have been in line with the national average up to 2003 and in 2004 were a little better. The great majority of students go on to university; a few start work or enter training directly. **Good progress has been made since the last inspection.** Sixth form numbers and results have improved. **Cost effectiveness is good.**

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Results match or exceed those nationally in most subjects because students achieve well, and very well in some subjects
- Relationships are excellent: students are responsible adults and many contribute effectively to the school community
- Students apply themselves very well to learning, both within and beyond lessons, supported by their excellent attitudes and behaviour
- Students learn well in response to teaching which is good or better in most subjects
- The sixth form is growing and improving because leadership is very good and management effective
- Enrichment opportunities are very good and well supported: choral music and sports are outstanding

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 on how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English literature is good . Students achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Most students have good literacy skills. In German , provision is satisfactory . Students learn and achieve satisfactorily in response to teaching which is satisfactory overall.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is very good . Teaching and learning are very good, leading to very good achievement. The mathematical skills of most sixth formers are well above average.
Science	In biology provision is good . Students learn and achieve well in response to good teaching and learning.
Information communication technology	Provision in taught ICT courses is good . Students achieve well overall because teaching and learning are good. Students' use of ICT in other subjects is unsatisfactory but now resourcing has been improved the potential for its further development is good.
Humanities	In classical studies (Latin and classical civilisation) provision is good because students achieve well in response to good teaching and learning. In both geography and history , provision is good . Students achieve highly in examinations in both subjects, relative to their GCSE grades.

Engineering, technology and manufacturing Provision in **design and technology** is **good**. Students achieve well in examinations because they are hardworking, learn well and teaching is good.

Visual and performing arts and media In both **art** and **music** provision is **good**. Students achieve well on their courses in both subjects because of good teaching and learning. In music, the high standards achieved by students in instrumental performance and in the extra-curricular activities make strong contributions to overall standards.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in physical education and sports science is very good . Students learn rapidly and achieve highly because teaching is very good. High levels of performance are fostered in the extensive extra-curricular programme. Many participate at county levels in rugby, cricket, swimming and athletics and some achieve distinction at national level.
Business	In both business studies and economics provision is very good . Students learn and achieve very well in response to teaching which is very good in business studies and excellent in economics.

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

Advice, guidance and support are good. A well-planned induction programme helps students to adapt to the sixth form. Arrangements for monitoring and guiding their progress are good. Students receive good advice and guidance on their futures. Relationships are excellent and sixth form students are treated as adults. Subject and form tutors and the head of the sixth form know them well individually.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form is very good and it is well managed. Planning is effective and the curriculum strengthened through links with neighbouring schools. The school's very high aspirations for the sixth form are reflected in its ethos, which is excellent. Monitoring of sixth form initiatives is strengthened through the proximity of the office of the head of sixth form to the students. Sixth formers contribute to school plans through discussion at their Senate.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

In discussion, students' views are highly favourable. The response to their questionnaire was also favourable, overall. The main areas of agreement match those of younger pupils. Their main concern on their questionnaire was about advice for their studies, future plans and for personal support. This indicates awareness that the school does not have formal structures, such as a student services officer, for dealing with their concerns. However, the school's effective pastoral arrangements are cultivated within a climate of excellent relationships, achieved through the respect and attention; which all staff show for students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are above average throughout and achievement is good in all years. Results both in Year 9 and at GCSE are consistently well above national averages, overall and in the three main subjects - English, mathematics and science. Analysis of results indicates that achievement up to Year 9 national tests is very good and from then to GCSE is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are consistently high
- Pupils' very good achievement in Year 9 national tests in English, mathematics and science provides a good basis for further learning
- Achievement in sports and choral music is outstandingly good throughout, enriched through extra-curricular activities
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in design and technology in Years 7 to 9 and ICT across the curriculum, and limited in art, because of weaknesses in curricular planning
- Standards and achievement are well above average in English, business studies and physical education in the main school
- In lessons generally little particular consideration is given to raising the achievement of more able pupils
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported and achieve very well at GCSE
- Standards are above average in sixth form lessons
- Sixth form results match or exceed those nationally in most subjects because students achieve well, and very well in some subjects

Commentary

1. Results indicate that pupils achieve very well across Years 7 to 9 in English, mathematics and science, from standards on entry which are just a little above average. In 2004, results in national tests in mathematics and science were well above the overall national average, as they were in 2003. National data are not yet available to make detailed comparison of Year 9 English results in 2004, but the scores obtained were better than in 2003, when they were well above average and particularly good for a boys' school. Because the local authority in which the school is sited is selective and the school works alongside grammar schools, the Year 9 results can also be compared with secondary modern schools, against which its results are very high. Teacher assessments of the standards pupils attain in other subjects are generally above average, except in modern foreign languages where they are average and in music, in which teachers' high expectations and lack of familiarity with the national assessment system have led to below average assessments. Inspection evidence is that attainment in music is broadly average by the time pupils reach Year 9.
2. From the very good foundation at the end of Year 9, results indicate that pupils achieve satisfactorily up to GCSE. In 2004 and recent years, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results in English, mathematics and science and overall were well above those of all schools nationally, and even better when compared with boys' schools. In 2003 overall GCSE results were very high when compared with secondary modern schools, as they are likely to be in 2004 (national comparators are not yet available). Results were well above the national average in most other subjects, but average in classical civilisation, French, history and Latin. Results in all individual subjects are very much higher than results in secondary modern schools. Results at the end of Year 9 have been rising faster than in all schools nationally, and at GCSE they are improving broadly in line with those nationally.

3. The main reasons for the apparent plateau in achievement between Year 9 and GCSE are linked to subject provision. Year 9 test results are based on English, mathematics and science. However, at GCSE results are obtained across a much wider range of subjects. In 2002, pupils' Year 9 test results in English were excellent - they reached a peak in performance in English for the school - and this has raised the baseline against which their subsequent achievement at GCSE has been measured. Pupils have not hitherto been accredited for their achievement in information and communication technology (ICT). In 2005, they will take GCSE in ICT for the first time, which should raise their overall examination performance. The school makes effective use of targets to improve results at GCSE. These are suitably challenging but were well exceeded in 2004. Results show that pupils exceed their target grades. Analysis shows that the pupils most heavily involved in sports add considerably more value to their results than the rest. No differences are apparent in the achievement of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. Pupils with special educational needs are supported and achieve well, and very well at GCSE. Most pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, achieve between six and 12 GCSE passes (grades A* to G). All Year 11 pupils who attended the learning support option exceeded their predicted grades.
4. Standards observed were generally above average, in both Years 9 and 11, and relatively higher in Year 11 than in Year 9. Achievement, overall, is good throughout. Standards and achievement alike are well above average in lessons in English, physical education and business studies. Pupils achieve very well in mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9, and in geography in Years 10 and 11. In design and technology in Years 10 and 11 pupils progress rapidly and achieve very well, making up for their unsatisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9, which results from the narrow curriculum, limited by shortage of time. Achievement is just satisfactory in French and German in Years 8 and 9, where the pattern of lessons in alternate weeks slows the learning of the more able. In art the curriculum does not have the depth intended by the National Curriculum, especially in Years 7 to 9, which limits pupils' achievement. Initiatives have started for the gifted and able but in lessons seen they did not achieve any better than others in their classes. Weaknesses in these areas indicate inconsistencies in the monitoring of teaching and the curriculum.
5. Standards of literacy are well above average and they are above average in numeracy. Competence in these core skills supports the progress of all pupils well. Those with special educational needs progress more rapidly as their reading and writing improves. While pupils achieve well in ICT lessons, ICT standards across the school are unsatisfactory because pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply and develop their skills. Extra-curricular activities support achievement very well, particularly in sports and choral music, in which excellence is a source of pride for the whole school.

Sixth form

6. Overall results in the General Certificate of Education (GCE) at Advanced Supplementary (AS) and Advanced (A2) levels for Year 13 have been in line with the national average up to 2003. In 2004, results improved in virtually all subjects. In most subjects, results match or exceed those nationally but tend to fluctuate because of small group sizes. In recent years they have consistently exceeded, or well exceeded, national averages in geography, design and technology (A2 level), music, physical education, business studies and economics. Results in the well-established BTEC National Diploma in sports science are good. (BTEC stands for Business and Technician Education Council.)
7. Standards and achievement observed in lessons were generally above average, and well above average in some, broadly in line with results. In music, standards were well above average, enhanced by students' instrumental ability. Students on physical education and sports science courses achieve very well and excel in some aspects; teaching and learning are very good and students are highly motivated. While achievement was satisfactory in German

lessons, standards were low, partly because learning has been interrupted by staff changes. A new subject leader is bringing improvements.

8. The school makes effective use of targets to raise results. Students achieve well overall. Analysis shows that students generally achieve better in biology, business studies, chemistry, history and further mathematics examinations than in most of their other subjects: this reflects particularly good added value relative to their GCSE grades. Students do not achieve so well in government and politics, French and German, in part due to staff changes.
9. Language and literacy skills are above average and students' mathematical competence is well above average. They have adequate ICT skills but not enough opportunities to use these across the curriculum to enhance their learning in all subjects, with the result that overall competence is unsatisfactory. Few students in the sixth form have special educational needs. Those who start courses are well supported and keep up with the rest. Analysis of results by ethnic background does not show any significant variation between different groups.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.06 (37.2)	N/A (33.4)
mathematics	39.03 (39.1)	35.5 (35.4)
science	37.05 (37.9)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 154 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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	84 (73)	53 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (96)	89 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (99)	97 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	347.0 (41.2)	282.5 (34.7)

There were 159 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. A new calculation of point scores has been introduced in 2004.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	100.0 (91.4)	N/A (89.4)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	50.5 (28.4)	N/A (32.6)
Average point score per pupil	283.4 (228.1)	N/A (258.2)

There were 68 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance and behaviour are very good. Attitudes are very good in the main school and excellent in the sixth form. Relationships are excellent. Pupils' personal (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) development is very good in the main school and excellent in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The emphasis on universal Christian values develops a strongly positive ethos
- Relationships are excellent: personal development is very good in the main school and excellent in the sixth form
- Pupils have few opportunities to experience radically different opinions and lifestyles
- Through involvement in sports students develop confidence and high expectations of themselves
- Attendance and punctuality are very good
- Formal structures for taking account of the views of pupils are not well established
- Sixth formers respond excellently to opportunities provided, develop maturity and contribute well to the school community

Commentary

10. The personal development of pupils is very good. At the heart of the school is its Catholicity and determination to develop in pupils an understanding of Catholic values and the resolution to live them daily. In the main school all pupils are Catholics but in the sixth form there are Christians of other denominations and Muslims. The emphasis is upon the development of universal Christian values and regular practice of the Catholic faith, though attendance at most services is voluntary. The chapel is a focal point in the life of the school. It is a place of calmness and beauty, and used for assemblies as well as services. Daily prayers take place in form rooms or assemblies. Relationships are excellent among pupils of all backgrounds and abilities. Many opportunities are provided for consideration of values and issues. Pupils respect the feelings and beliefs of others. Because the school is united in its approach to moral issues, pupils develop a strong sense of justice. All understand the responsibility of living in a community and the need to contribute. All pupils appreciate their own culture within the Catholic context but they have few opportunities to explore radically different points of view. Given the diversity of culture and opinion in Britain today this is a gap in provision.
11. The very positive attitudes of the pupils spring both from the Catholicity of the school and from its subjects and activities. Pupils are highly responsive to much of the teaching and to the range of subjects and activities provided. Teachers establish excellent relationships with pupils, enabling them to contribute well to their own learning. The interest and achievement in sports of all kinds and in choral music are exceptional. Pupils are very ready to take responsibility in house and sports activities and as librarians and prefects. Through sports activities they learn to work collaboratively and strive for success. They develop confidence in their abilities. Pupils with special educational needs are willing to work hard and the good support they receive helps them to enjoy learning.
12. Behaviour is very good in general. Movement around the site is not regimented and there are no signs of aggression. In spite of crowded conditions, lunchtime is orderly. Occasionally behaviour is unsatisfactory in lessons; a few pupils are unwilling to learn and co-operate and there are some attempts at disruption. The number of exclusions is broadly average. This sanction is used only as a last resort, and appropriately. A few pupils have been excluded repeatedly and, when account taken of this, there is no significant difference between exclusions of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. The internal exclusion in school works well and allows the student to keep up with lessons. Attendance is very good. Students

arrive punctually, sometimes helped by the school minibus, which regularly supplements service buses. Movement time between lessons is enough to ensure punctuality.

13. In discussion, pupils say they are proud to be at the school. They particularly like its heritage, Catholic ethos and success in sports. A very high response was obtained to their questionnaire. In this, they overwhelmingly agree that the school is a good place, they are well taught and teachers have high expectations. Inspectors agree with these good features. Aspects of the school they express most concern about in their questionnaire are bullying and behaviour, and the care and support they receive. Inspectors found no evidence of bullying or of much unsatisfactory behaviour. Pupils in discussion said that there was little bullying and that incidents were dealt with well, which was also parents' view. Inspectors found care and support to be good. The excellent relationships which pervade the school are founded on respect, consideration and concern for the individual. The school achieves this through the attention which individual members of staff, including form tutors and subject teachers, show their pupils. Formal structures, for example, the school council, are less well established, and the school does not have a pupil counsellor or a pupil services officer.

14. Overall, pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good in the main school, as they were at the last inspection, and excellent in the sixth form. Attitudes in lessons have improved. They are now very good, rather than good. Punctuality is also better, due partly to the useful changeover time allowed between lessons.

Sixth form

15. Students' personal development is excellent. Sixth formers achieve a maturity and sense of their own worth which are unusually good and an excellent preparation for life. The concept of community service is strong. Sixth formers are highly responsible members of the school community. Many sixth formers mentor Year 7 pupils, which means a heavy commitment of time and effort. Through sports college developments they assist in local primary schools, at a local special school and some are embarking soon on a project to work with street kids in Mexico. Within school they organise the altar boys' rota and supervise some school routines. The framework for this excellent personal development is similar to that in the main school. The development of universal Christian values is strong. Many opportunities are provided for consideration of moral issues and to take responsibility. Excellent relationships are cultivated among students of all backgrounds, interests and abilities.
16. Their views are harnessed through the sixth form Senate and daily contact with head of sixth form, whose office is at the entrance to the sixth form centre. Additionally the views of students on the BTEC National sports science course are surveyed, and those of all A2 level students through external evaluation. Students are known well individually and staff treat students with respect, while also having very high expectations. Students' attitudes to the school are very good and their behaviour is excellent. Attendance and punctuality are very good. Self-discipline is strongly developed and the commitment of many to sports heightens their awareness of this. In learning they want success. This is evident through their high levels of motivation and independence.
17. While in discussion students' views of the sixth form are highly favourable, their response to their questionnaire was mixed, but less so than for younger pupils. The main areas of agreement match those of younger pupils. Their main concern is about advice on their studies, future plans and for personal support. This reflects their awareness that the school does not have formal structures, such as a student services officer, for dealing with their concerns. The school's very effective pastoral arrangements are cultivated through the respect and attention individual staff show for students, and students recognise this.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.7	School data	0.1
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

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	754	21	1
White – Irish	34	0	0
White – any other White background	40	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	16	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	23	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	21	1	1
Asian or Asian British – Indian	15	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	17	1	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	19	2	0
Black or Black British – African	21	4	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	17	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	25	2	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is good overall. Teaching and learning are good throughout. The curriculum is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Care, guidance and support are good. Partnership with parents is very good, and with other schools and the community, it is good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good both in the main school and in the sixth form. Marking and assessment are effective overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn systematically because the large majority of teachers are experts in their subjects and use their knowledge well
- Expectations are high: pupils generally apply themselves well in lessons
- The learning climate is very good because relationships are excellent
- Not enough use is made of ICT to strengthen learning across the curriculum
- Younger pupils do not know how they are progressing relative to national standards

- Teachers have good information on pupils' progress but do not fully exploit this to challenge individuals, including the more able
- Sixth formers are expected to contribute in lessons and this promotes their learning very effectively

Commentary

18. Teaching and learning are good in most subjects, including mathematics and science, and in English, business studies, geography and physical education they are very good. Staffing is stable, compared with many schools and, in nearly all areas, teachers are good subject specialists. Relationships are excellent, fostered by the strong Catholic ethos of the school. Teachers are very considerate of individuals. These factors contribute to a very secure learning environment in which pupils learn systematically and achieve well. This is particularly noticeable in younger classes.
19. Teachers draw effectively on their subject knowledge and experience and provide well-structured lessons, with a suitable range of activities. Usually the purpose is clearly explained, followed by a range of suitable activities and the main learning points are summarised at the end, as observed in science. At times the summary is skipped and thus the opportunity to consolidate learning is missed, as observed occasionally in history. Pupils respond well to opportunities to contribute or choose activities, as in some art and French lessons. However, they do not always have enough opportunity to use the spoken language in modern foreign languages, which holds back their speaking skills. In English, much of the teaching is skilled and persuasive. Pupils respond well, including older ones who like the freedom of choice they have in written coursework, which helps them to achieve very well. Teachers generally use time well and maintain a good lesson pace which moves pupils on in their learning. However, at times, activities do not suit the one hour duration, as in art and design and technology, and occasionally in physical education.
20. On the whole, the grouping of pupils by ability in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages assists teachers in planning lessons. Work is appropriately challenging for the average attainment level of the class and teachers respond helpfully to individuals. Teachers use questioning well to gauge pupils' understanding. Very good examples of questioning were seen, for example, in art, enabling the teacher to evaluate strengths and weaknesses, and in music, which prompted pupils to think and reason. Teachers have good records of pupils' progress. Many teachers, however, do not fully exploit this information in plans to challenge individuals, including the more able, in lessons, as sometimes in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. Younger pupils have little knowledge of how they are progressing relative to national standards, until the end of Year 9. In a few lessons seen, unsettled attitudes among small groups of pupils, particularly in Years 9 and 11, were not channelled constructively, and learning was unsatisfactory. The reasons were various but fundamentally because activities were not appropriately challenging for all pupils, as observed in mathematics and music, and in French because feedback by the teacher was not precise enough to raise standards.
21. Teachers' very high expectations of behaviour and performance and the climate of mutual respect foster pupils' very good attitudes. The attention of more able pupils was excellently captured in economics by referring to current issues, such as take-over deals. Pupils learn to take responsibility for their own learning, and to progress logically through a series of tasks, developing relevant skills and knowledge, as in geography and physical education.

Example of outstanding practice

High expectations in the physical education department engender sporting and academic success.

Each individual is taken on his own merit and challenged and developed to reach his

potential. He is supported and challenged. Students develop a passion to work hard physically and intellectually, to the best of their abilities. They are proud to be part of a system that fosters success on the games field, on the track and in the classroom. They know it is important to compete at the highest level as an individual or part of a team. They know how to win and how to use technology to help them win. The rigour of training and the need for refinement of skill are paramount. Self-discipline is well honed from an early age and opportunities to improve further are exploited.

22. Pupils with special educational needs receive much encouragement from subject teachers, who know them well. When available, teaching assistants are effective in ensuring progress and they know and record pupils' needs very well. Teachers know pupils' individual plans but do not always use them to plan relevant activities. In lessons seen, tasks were rarely modified. Pupils with speech, communication and literacy needs receive effective support in small groups with specialist teachers. Most teachers are aware of the home or first languages of bilingual pupils but some are not aware of ways of supporting bilingual pupils effectively.
23. Pupils' learning is characterised by systematic development of knowledge, understanding and skills. In the best lessons, they are very enthusiastic. Literacy skills are very well developed. Pupils listen and communicate effectively in the climate of excellent relationships. Numeracy skills are well developed and assist pupils' progress in subjects including science, geography and design and technology. The use of ICT is not exploited well enough. Pupils miss opportunities to use ICT for a range of purposes, including creatively. By the time they reach Year 11 most pupils have developed the skills and capacity to work independently and collaboratively. Teachers place effective emphasis on examination requirements and revision. Through work in lessons, including physical education, pupils learn to evaluate their own and others' work and to plan ways in which their performance can be improved. They want to succeed and most have the skills to do so.
24. Teaching and learning were good at the last inspection and remain good now. In several ways, they are better. More good, very good and excellent lessons were observed on this inspection. Teaching in design and technology is now consistently good. At the last inspection parents expressed concern about homework. Worthwhile homework is now set regularly, and effectively extends learning. Marking of pupils' work guides their progress effectively, on the whole. Many teachers add helpful comments. Inconsistencies occur in mathematics and modern foreign languages, especially when pupils mark their own work.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 167 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8 (5%)	46 (27%)	73 (44%)	32 (19%)	7 (4%)	1 (1%)	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.

Sixth form

25. Sixth form teaching and learning are good overall and share many of the characteristics of teaching and learning lower down the school. The climate for learning is very good, fostered by excellent relationships. Teachers' subject knowledge is mostly very effectively used to develop students' knowledge and understanding, as in English literature, where teachers' knowledge of literature from Chaucer to the twentieth century enables students to achieve well. Similarly, in mathematics teachers draw effectively on their subject knowledge to provide accurate instruction and in biology there is effective emphasis on key points and use of well-focused questions. In business studies teachers use interesting case studies, for example, the Glastonbury Festival, to raise awareness of different business concepts.

26. A noticeable feature in the sixth form is the involvement of students in lessons. They are encouraged to draw on their general and subject knowledge, for example, in business, economics, geography, music and sports studies. Presentations by students consolidate their understanding and enliven learning, as in art, biology and history. Independent research enriches their understanding, for example, of the social implications of ICT. In English literature, however, some opportunities are missed to involve students as participants in seminar-style discussion. Most Year 13 students have very good research skills.
27. Students are known well individually. Their awareness of the importance of taking responsibility for their own learning is cultivated from the very onset of the sixth form, in their induction programme. In sports science, for example, students work hard in both practical and theoretical aspects. Students' work is helpfully marked and progress is monitored systematically. They know the grades they can realistically be aiming towards. Virtually all want to do better and they work hard to achieve this. Weak features, observed in a few lessons, as in modern foreign languages, resulted from a pedestrian approach, with not enough challenge and involvement of the students in learning.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources likewise are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The traditional, academic curriculum is of good quality but response to the national 14 to 19 strategy for broadening the curriculum has been slow
- The curriculum does not meet fully National Curriculum requirements in the use of ICT across the curriculum and in design and technology in Years 7 to 9 because of shortage of time
- Extra-curricular activities are extensive and of high quality, especially in sports, games and music
- In art, not enough emphasis is placed on creative aspects
- Arrangements for more able pupils to study both French and German in Years 8 and 9 restrict progress in each language
- The curriculum in physical education is very good, enhanced by its very good facilities
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good: they progress well
- A good range of GCE subjects is provided in the sixth form
- Sixth form opportunities are extended through collaboration with nearby schools

Commentary

28. The curriculum is satisfactory. The range of subjects caters well for the interests and need of most pupils but there are weaknesses in several aspects of planning. Overall, satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection. Arrangements for science have improved. Now all pupils study double award science in the main school. Provision for ICT is much better in taught lessons. However, some weaknesses reported at previous inspections remain in design and technology and ICT across the curriculum, as described in following paragraphs. Sixth form provision is good, as at the last inspection.
29. The school ensures that all pupils have good access to subjects offered. Strengths lie in the breadth of subjects both in Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE. These include Latin in Year 7 and classical civilisation for many in Year 8 upwards. All study French from Year 7. However, opportunity for the more able to study both French and German from Year 8 is managed only by arranging lessons for each language in alternate weeks, which interrupts the continuity of their learning and reduces the learning time in each language. The time allocated to most

subjects is in line with that nationally, but design and technology has only half the usual time, which does not allow full coverage of National Curriculum requirements; design elements are weak. This was reported at the two previous inspections. In art, while the overall time allowed matches that in most schools, not enough emphasis is placed on creative aspects; this also was reported at the previous inspection. Considerable progress has been made since the last inspection in resourcing and in provision of lessons for ICT, but its use across the curriculum is too patchy and therefore unsatisfactory. Arrangements for supporting literacy and numeracy are good.

30. Overall curricular planning is good in most subjects. Planning is very good in physical education and strengthened through sports college links. It is also very good in business, just satisfactory in mathematics, but there are unsatisfactory aspects (already mentioned) in design and technology, art and ICT. Schemes of work include plans for extending the more able, but little evidence was seen of extra activities during the inspection. These various inconsistencies indicate a lack of rigour in monitoring the curriculum.
31. Two GCSE subjects introduced in Years 10 and 11 widen pupils' choice: business and economics, and both are successful. However, the school has been slow to implement fully recent curricular initiatives. While provision for citizenship is satisfactory, it is not systematically planned across all subjects. In response to the national 14 to 19 strategy for the development of the curriculum a vocational course in leisure and tourism and applied GCSEs in business and design and technology have been introduced. Other departments, including ICT and art, are planning to contribute to vocational developments.
32. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. An electronic literacy programme to improve reading supplements literacy lessons. Extra support is provided for pupils preparing for GCSE. Homework clubs operate at lunchtimes together with other activities such as quizzes. Courses in anger management and social skills are provided and benefit pupils. Support for pupils with statements of special educational needs is provided in full and often supplemented from school funds.
33. Provision for personal, social and health education is good and meets requirements. Overall, the school prepares its pupils well for the next stages in their education, further study or employment. Additional comments on personal, social and health education are given in paragraphs 136 and 137 and on careers education in paragraphs 65 to 71.
34. Opportunities for enrichment are very good and this is a strength of the school. Support for learning outside the school day is very good. The vast majority of departments provide additional support through extra classes and courses alongside the homework clubs. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities is well supported by students, although few opportunities are provided in art. Participation in sport is excellent. Sports college status has significantly enriched extra-curricular activities. An innovative approach and a good philosophy to the recreational aspects of sport are supported by a huge commitment of time at weekends. There are regular ski trips and cricket and rugby trips abroad. Extra-curricular activities in music are extensive and the school has a national profile for the quality of its choral work. Drama is strong and students make frequent theatre visits. Particular strengths lie in the enrichment activities for business, economics and history through industry days, participation in the Young Enterprise scheme and the production of the history magazine.

Staffing, accommodation and resources

35. Staffing, accommodation and resources for learning vary across the school and are satisfactory, overall. For example, staffing is very good in physical education, good in business studies, English, ICT, history but unsatisfactory in design and technology. As a direct result of the school's sports college status, facilities for physical education are excellent. Parents have substantially helped in improving the environment and equipment for music. However, design and technology accommodation is poor and resources are still unsatisfactory

and restrict opportunities to teach the full curriculum. Completion of the sports hall allows plans for improving design and technology accommodation to proceed. The library is a well-used learning resource but its accommodation is not sufficient for the number of pupils in the school. The ICT resources are satisfactory but not well used across the subjects. The deficiencies in resources have implications for learning in the areas concerned.

Sixth form

36. Over 25 GCE subjects are offered at AS and A2 levels and provide a good range of choice and specialism. Opportunities are enhanced through the BTEC National course in sports science but no intermediate (level 2) courses are provided, and there are none in other curricular areas. Year 11 pupils who wish to study other subjects are helped to continue at other local schools and at nearby colleges of further education. Parents' expectations are for a mainly traditional curriculum and lack of space has restricted developments. Recent investment in ICT and continuing success in business courses have encouraged the school to plan vocational courses in these areas. Links with other local schools extend opportunities, for example, in music technology and psychology.
37. In addition to examination courses, personal, social and health education is provided, which covers required topics, some in conjunction with religious education, for example, human relationships and sex education. Key skills, including communicating with others, is also provided. Few students in the sixth form have special educational needs but those who do are supported effectively. Year 12 students take an effective general studies course and in Year 13 they can choose to continue the subject, taught at a partner girls' school. Partnership with nearby schools extends extra-curricular activities, for example through regular drama productions. Preparation for the future, including careers education is good. A programme of visits and effective links are in place with local colleges and universities.
38. The opportunities for enrichment are very good. This is a strength of the school and makes a significant contribution to the standards achieved. The wide range of extra-curricular activities is well supported and enables sixth form students to develop leadership and team skills. Provision in sport and music is particularly strong and students are successful in a national context. The opportunities to meet and mix with a range of students from other schools and of varying backgrounds broadens their educational experience and prepares them for the next stage of education.
39. Accommodation is mostly of good quality, but increase in sixth form numbers has resulted in crowding in the sixth form centre. Although it was very newly opened at the time of the inspection, sixth formers were making excellent use of the facilities, including fitness training, in the sports hall. Resourcing is good and staffing adequate.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare and support given to pupils are good. Systematic tracking of pupils' progress and the advice and guidance for them to improve their work are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are looked after very well and they feel safe and secure
- Younger pupils have little knowledge of their standards, relative to those nationally, on which to base efforts to improve
- Academic mentoring in Year 11 effectively informs pupils on how to improve their performance
- Pupils feel they are listened to and valued
- The views of sixth formers influence school planning

Commentary

40. Health and safety arrangements, judged poor at the last inspection, are now satisfactory, with sound first aid facilities and several trained first aid staff. Risk assessment is good in building-related matters but just satisfactory overall. Child protection procedures are adequate. Arrangements depend heavily on the deputy headteacher, the designated child protection officer, who is about to update his training. No pupils are on the child protection risk register at present. Pupils' awareness of matters related to their health and welfare is helpfully raised through the curriculum, including personal, social and health education and physical education. Pupils' well-being is also well supported by visiting specialists such as those from medical and social services, the police and judiciary. The standard of catering is good, with snacks available before school, at breaktime and a range of nutritious food at lunchtime. The school council is used to gauge pupils' views. School councillors are able to list with pride some of the council's achievements, which shows that pupils feel their views are valued.
41. Induction arrangements for new pupils are good and effective. The pastoral system, based on tutors and heads of year, is well established. The tutor provides the first point of pastoral contact and pupils trust their tutors. Teachers have a good range of information on the standards achieved by pupils in their subjects. The system of tracking progress and setting targets for improvement is satisfactory and most pupils exceed their targets. Subject leaders inform senior managers of any emerging concerns. The heads of year contact parents in cases of underachievement. Marking is in line with the school's system of informing pupils of their achievements relative to their ability. Younger pupils have little knowledge of their standards, relative to those nationally, on which to base efforts to improve. There are plans to extend the good practice of academic mentoring in Year 11 to other year groups. The central record of rewards and sanctions along with the school's own 'card' system and pupils' journals provide effective means of monitoring pupils' personal development. Pupils are effectively advised about the next stage of their learning and future options through careers education, which is commented on more fully in the work related learning section (paragraphs 65 to 71).
42. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is effective and enables the provision of appropriate support. Their progress is appropriately monitored and annual reviews are held as required. The school provides some support for pupils with English as an additional language. At present, none is identified as being at an early stage of learning English and there is no formal diagnostic testing of pupils with English as an additional language, to establish their stage of competence in English.
43. Care, guidance and support have improved effectively since the last inspection. Health and safety arrangements are better. The standard of catering has improved, influenced by the wishes of pupils as well as governors, in seeking best value. Better use is made of information on the progress of pupils.

Sixth form

44. A well-planned induction programme helps students adapt to learning in the sixth form. This is supplemented through sessions to develop 'brain power'. Students' progress relative to their target grades is monitored regularly; arrangements are good. They know how they are getting on, through their subject and form tutors. Students receive good advice and guidance on their futures, in part through the programme in weekly form periods. All have opportunity for careers education and guidance.
45. Relationships are excellent and sixth form students are treated as adults. Sixth formers have a voice on school issues through their Senate and influence school planning, for example, in relation to the courses offered and links with St Philomena's. The school takes systematic account of their views as part of the arrangements for the BTEC National sports science course and also through external evaluation of A2 level results. Information received is taken seriously by the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnership arrangements have improved since the last inspection in that partnership with parents is now very good. Overall, links with the community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents' confidence in the school is very high and they actively support their children's learning
- Links with the Church, sports community and through choral music are very productive
- Links with the wider community are little developed in many subjects, limiting pupils' personal development and experience of the application of their learning

Commentary

46. As at the last inspection, parents take a keen interest in their children's progress. They place a high level of trust in the school and are very pleased with most aspects of its work. Concerns they expressed at the last inspection about homework and marking have both been dealt with. The school keeps parents well informed about general matters and contacts them not only to deal with problems but also to celebrate their sons' success and achievement. The statutory information not included in the governors' annual report at the time of the last inspection, is now included. The prospectus, however, still does not fully meet the statutory requirements as it contains no comparative data for the school's test and public examination results nor does it inform parents of their right to withdraw their children from religious education, worship and sex education. Pupils' annual progress reports are good and clearly inform parents about how their sons are getting on with their work and what they need to do to improve their performance.

47. The school seeks to consult and involve parents. Their attendance at parent-teacher evenings is good. A number of parents offer practical support to the school by helping on educational trips and many attend fundraising activities organised by the parent-teacher association, which has raised substantial funds to improve the school. They strongly support the extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and music.
48. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are very supportive of the pupils and the school. The special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with the main feeder primary schools to ensure a smooth transition into Year 7. The primary school teachers of pupils with special educational needs often visit to help prepare for the transfer. Good use is made of various external support services.
49. The impact of links with the community and with other schools and colleges on the curriculum and on pupils' personal development is good overall, with several significant strengths. The school cultivates very good relationships with the Church and the sports community, as at the last inspection. Visits and visitors are of particular help in these respects. Effective contacts with further education establishments help in providing guidance to pupils about their future choices. Helpful links with teacher training providers assist in recruiting teachers. The chapel at the school is a focus for the local Catholic community. Extensive links with sports organisations at regional and national levels, particularly for cricket, rugby and athletics, reinforce very high expectations and are a source of pride. Under the scope of its specialist status, a teacher from the school provides extensive curricular and staff development support to the feeder primary schools. This link also makes a positive contribution to the transfer of pupils new to Year 7. Excellence in choral performance has raised the status of music and forged links nationally. Links with the wider community and with industry and commerce enrich the curriculum in business studies and economics but there are few in other subjects, limiting pupils' experience of the application of their learning. Due to planning restrictions the wider local community benefits little as yet from the excellent sports hall facilities.

Sixth form

50. Collaboration with nearby girls' schools extends students' learning opportunities and social experiences. Staff liaise effectively with other colleges, universities and training providers which helps in providing students with good advice and guidance for entry into higher education or the world of work. Students support the physical education curriculum in the feeder primary schools, which assists their personal development. Parental involvement, as in the main school, is very good. Many students maintain links with the school, after leaving, through The John Fisher Association. This continuity strengthens the heritage of the school which also benefits in practical ways, including links with professions and raising money.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. Governance is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good. Financial management is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership by the headteacher is very good, supported by very strong teamwork among senior managers, whose concern for the individual underpins pupils' very good personal development
- Overall strategic planning reflects the aims of the school and improvement plans are appropriate
- Monitoring of performance is effective but the monitoring of the curriculum and classroom practice is too broad-brush so essential details in the curriculum and teaching are missed
- Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory in arrangements for design and technology, art and ICT across the curriculum: requirements of the National Curriculum are still not met

- Governors are very supportive of the school but have not sufficiently held the school to account in several aspects of its work
- While action is being taken to reduce the workload of staff, anomalies occur and music teachers bear a heavy enrichment programme
- The sixth form is growing and improving because leadership is very good

Commentary

51. Leadership by the headteacher is very good. Pupils and parents hold him in high esteem; consensus is strong that the school is well led. The commitment shown by the headteacher and other senior staff to inclusion and the progress of individuals underpins the very effective support that all staff provide for pupils' personal development. Teamwork is very strong among senior managers. They inspire and motivate pupils and staff. Parents are very supportive of the school and pupils are proud to belong. Shared commitment to universal values is reflected in the school's very positive ethos and pupils' enjoyment of school life.
52. Governors are very supportive of the school, its Catholic ethos and appreciate the hard work that has brought about specialist status as a sports college. They have good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and effectively apply best value principles. They share commitment to improvement and contribute to school planning. While many of their contributions are good and governance in the sixth form is good, in the main school their effectiveness is just satisfactory because governors have not sufficiently held the school to account for its work. The National Curriculum is not fully met in design and technology, and in the use of ICT across all subjects. In addition, the prospectus does not report national comparators for the school's test and public examination results nor does it inform parents of their right to withdraw their children from religious education, worship and sex education.
53. Overall, management is effective. Strategic planning is good. It reflects the aims of the school to develop its Catholic ethos and to improve the quality of education and standards. A regular cycle of meetings supports teamwork at all levels. The development of sports college status builds on an established major strength. Many pupils and students are attracted by the school's outstanding reputation in sports and a number of teachers have chosen to work here because they can combine their sports interests for example, in rugby, with subject teaching. The completion of the sports hall, just before the inspection, allows other developments to follow, including improvement in accommodation for design and technology (a key issue of the last inspection report). Most initiatives stemming from sports college status are developing well, including enhancement of the sports curriculum, links with feeder primary schools and international liaison. However, while specialist status has been a priority other developments have been slow (see improvements since the last inspection, which follows).
54. The main themes and strategies of the school improvement plan are appropriate. Several areas for improvement identified at this inspection, for example, reviewing the curriculum and the need for greater consistency in assessment are included in school plans. School improvement initiatives are reflected in subject plans, which in turn build on performance management arrangements. Professional development activities reflect an appropriately wide range of interests and are carefully evaluated. New teachers are supported effectively and enabled to do their best; some of the very good teaching seen at the inspection was by new teachers. Non-teaching staff contribute very well to the life of the school and are respected members of the school community.
55. Monitoring of the work of the school is carefully documented and arrangements are very systematic. Information on performance is scrutinised effectively both at whole school level and in subjects and targets are set for improvement. The school maintains a record of high results. However, the monitoring of curricular plans and classroom practice misses detail. For example, lesson planning is generally matched to average attainment levels - and few lessons were seen in which extra activities were provided for the more able. Not enough use is made

of ICT in other subjects. The curriculum in art does not place enough emphasis on creative aspects.

56. Most aspects of the work of the school are led and managed well, and some very well, including English, geography, business studies and economics and history in the sixth form. Leadership of physical education is outstanding and its management is very good. Because of lack of progress in developments, aspects of leadership are unsatisfactory in mathematics and design and technology and of management in art. While leadership is very good in music, its management is unsatisfactory in the main school. A very heavy workload lowers its effectiveness. Provision for special educational needs is co-ordinated well, and takes account also of any literacy support required for pupils who speak English in addition to their home language. The deployment of classroom assistants to departments is increasing their effectiveness. The departmental plan is good and links well with school plans.
57. Action is being taken on reduction in the workload of teachers. Many aspects of the school's work are benefiting from the timetabling of meetings within the school day. However, anomalies occur. The heavy extra-curricular music programme falls to a large extent on two teachers and restricts time given to organising the main music curriculum.

Sixth form

58. Leadership of the sixth form is very good and it is well managed. Numbers have grown over the last few years and results improved. The curriculum has been strengthened through links with neighbouring schools and the professional development programme. A good number of teachers have attended training for courses in advanced level subjects, for example. In most sixth form subjects leadership and management are good or very good. Both are outstanding in physical education and leadership is excellent in economics. As in the main school, leadership is unsatisfactory in design and technology and management in music.
59. Planning for the sixth form is effective and included in overall school improvement plans. Recent interest in broadening the 14 to 19 curriculum has led to proposals of more vocational and applied courses. Good links exist with other providers in Sutton and nearby schools and through these students' choice is widened. The staying-on rate is good and scope for expansion in current accommodation is limited. Sixth form numbers already fill to capacity the sixth form centre accommodation. Day-to-day arrangements work well.
60. The school's very high aspirations for the sixth form are reflected in its ethos, which is excellent. Students know they are respected and treated as adults and they respond with maturity. They contribute very well to the school community, for example, through the house system and support for younger pupils.
61. Monitoring of sixth form initiatives, while similar to that in the main school, is strengthened through the proximity of the head of sixth form to the students. He sees them daily and knows them well. Subject teachers, likewise, take a close interest in students' progress. They contribute to school plans through discussion at their sixth form Senate.

Improvement since the last inspection

62. Overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory in the main school. Teaching and learning are better. High standards have been maintained. Results have improved faster than nationally in Year 9 and in line with the national trend at GCSE. Sixth form results are also better. The school has acquired sports college status and maintained outstanding strengths in sports and in music activities. It is in the top five schools in the country for rugby. As at the last inspection, the school has a very strong partnership with parents and the Catholic community.

63. However, relatively slow progress has been made on several specific issues of the last inspection. Very little improvement has been made in the curriculum for design and technology and virtually none in its accommodation, although this is now possible because space is freed now the new sports hall has been built. While improvements have been made in resourcing and teaching ICT, its use across the curriculum is too patchy. Matters concerning health and safety are improved, in particular the frequency of fire drills and, as at the last inspection, response is fast to minor hazards.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,833,838	Balance from previous year	11,018
Total expenditure	3,835,829	Balance carried forward to the next	9,027
Expenditure per pupil	4012		

64. Financial management is good. Arrangements are systematic. Departments bid for funds to support developments. Good value is sought, for example, in painting and decorating, catering and grounds maintenance. When account is taken of the amount of money coming into the school, which is broadly average, the generally favourable backgrounds of pupils and the well above average results achieved, the school provides good value for money. The cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good, bearing in mind the income per student, which is average, and achievement overall, which is good.

WORK RELATED LEARNING (WRL)

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for WRL have been identified and further development planned, through review of the curriculum
- All Year 10 pupils go on well-planned and supervised placements
- WRL is well developed in business studies, design and technology and economics but is limited in other subjects

Commentary

65. WRL has satisfactory impact on pupils' achievements. All Year 10 pupils learn directly about work through well-planned and supervised work experience placements. They consolidate their learning about employment and work by reflecting on the skills they have used and learned, and by completing diaries. Year 11 pupils participate in the Share Price Game. Some more able pupils in Year 10 benefit by joining Year 12 in Young Enterprise activities. Pupils appreciate the various opportunities provided and many parents support them, for example by providing work placements. Next term all Year 10 pupils will be involved in a business day project to develop enterprise and work related skills. Further enrichment is planned through visits to industry for all Year 11 pupils.

66. Careers education effectively informs pupils' plans for the future, including understanding of work and the skills required. The main careers programme starts in Year 9 and continues through Years 10 and 11 in personal, social and health education. It includes visits and careers information evenings which are well supported by Connexions and representatives of

commerce and the professions. Pupils are encouraged to seek advice and use materials in the well-stocked careers room. In Year 11, all pupils have personal interviews with the Connexions Service, which helps them to shape their plans for the future.

67. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is mainly traditional GCSE subjects with the recent incorporation of GNVQ leisure and tourism and applied GCSEs in business studies and in design and technology. These courses introduce pupils to work-related learning and equip them with some of the skills they will need in the work place or in future education and training. No results for the newly introduced courses are yet available. However, pupils are progressing well, and very well in business studies. Business studies is well established and a very popular GCSE option choice. In Years 10 and 11 it is taken by over half the year group, and the business ethic is well developed, enabling pupils to achieve very well. Examples related to business proliferate in both business studies and economics. Few other subjects have explicitly linked elements related to the world of work, but in French and German Year 11 pupils draw up a curriculum vitae and apply for a job, explaining their suitability and qualifications.
68. WRL is well managed and organised. The co-ordinator has carried out a detailed audit to measure compliance with Government guidelines. Leadership is satisfactory. While the school has been a little slow in developing this aspect of its work, WRL is now well established. The Junior Sports Leaders Award has recently been introduced and further courses are planned in the sixth form.

Sixth form

69. WRL is developing satisfactorily in the sixth form. The only vocational course is the BTEC National Diploma course in sports science. Aspects of other AS and A2 level courses also contribute, notably business studies, economics, design and technology and ICT. The BTEC National course has had major impact on achievement for many students with few or low GCSE grades. They enjoy the course and achieve well. The school plans to introduce advanced vocational courses in business and ICT, next year.
70. WRL is provided for all through careers education, and students have opportunities to attend careers events and receive guidance, as in the main school. They learn to take responsibility, complete tasks and work to deadlines through undertaking activities such as organising social events, publishing *The Fishtickler*, and participating and leading in many music and sports activities.
71. The school's arrangements for WRL are reasonably effective. Of the students who left at the end of Year 13 in 2004, a small number started work directly and the great majority continued their education at University. Of these, about 80 per cent chose courses directly related to work: engineering, ICT, sports and leisure industries, business and medicine were popular among the vocational areas chosen.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good in all year groups
- Standards are well above the national averages by the end of Years 9 and 11
- Very good teaching and careful assessment procedures help pupils to succeed well in national tests and examinations
- The English department is very effectively led and managed
- No guidance is provided for teachers in all subjects to help bilingual pupils strengthen their English

Commentary

72. Standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 are well above the national average. The achievement of pupils is very good. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are well above average when compared with all schools nationally and when compared with other pupils of similar attainment in Year 6. This high level of achievement is due to very skilled specialist teaching, careful assessment of pupils' progress and to their positive attitudes. The pupils who come to the school with relatively low standards of literacy or with special educational needs receive good support and make equally good progress. Pupils of all ages read well from a wide range of material including set books. By Year 9 most are competent in preparing and delivering a speech to the class using persuasive language and techniques effectively. Pupils write confidently in a range of styles and for a range of purposes.
73. Standards in English are similarly well above the national average by the end of Year 11. Achievement continues to be very good for pupils of all ethnic backgrounds. Examination results in English were well above the national average for all pupils in both 2003 and 2004 and were particularly high when compared with scores for boys nationally. The overall results indicate that most pupils make very good progress in English from Year 7 to Year 11. Results in English literature are well above the national average for all pupils and are particularly high when compared with male pupils. Pupils perform especially well in comparison with their other school subjects. The high level of achievement is due to very committed, experienced specialist teachers who expect pupils to work hard and with enjoyment, both in class and at home. The department introduces pupils to the GCSE course towards the end of Year 9 so that a good start can be made on coursework units. Pupils receive thorough guidance on planning and paragraphing essays. As a result, in response to literature, many pupils produce writing of a very high standard. For example, essays on Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men' reveal not only a thorough knowledge of the plot and the characters but also reveal mature skills in analysing motives and commenting on moral dilemmas.
74. Teaching and learning are very good in all years. Teachers have strong subject expertise and a commitment to promoting high achievement. Pupils are generally very willing participants, who enjoy the range of approaches used in most lessons. A group of pupils in Year 8, for example, showed great enthusiasm in performing the well-written play scripts of their peers. A very small minority of older pupils, however, show some reluctance to write until pressed. The fact that teachers have good relationships with pupils and are sensitive to their individual needs, including those with special educational needs, ensures that all move forward.

Teachers give willingly of their time to support those needing help, with extra classes for small numbers of younger pupils to improve their basic skills. Regular theatre visits enhance pupils' understanding of set plays and playwrights and broaden their cultural experience.

75. The department is very well led and managed. Well above average results have been maintained. The subject leader has tackled well the issues identified for improvement at the last inspection. All teachers are now subject specialists and a clear system of regular monitoring of teaching is in place: teaching is better now. Assessment has improved so that teachers and parents can note progress of pupils across Years 7 to 11. Areas still needing development are the completion of the revision to the schemes of work and more regular use of ICT in younger years. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is good.

Language and Literacy across the curriculum

76. Standards of literacy are very good throughout the school. Reading and writing skills are well above the national average in tests taken near the end of Year 9. The school identifies pupils with below average literacy skills on entry, those with special educational needs, and those who are learning English in addition to their home language. Extra classes before and after school are available to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 who would benefit from additional literacy help. Teaching and learning were very good in the two classes seen. The school provides good support for pupils with special educational needs, mainly within classrooms, and some specialist support for those starting to learn English, although none is identified as being at an early stage of learning English. Most teachers are aware of the nature of the language needs of the pupils listed but some are not aware of how to help bilingual pupils more effectively. At the moment there are no arrangements for the diagnostic testing of new pupils who are bilingual.
77. The school has made effective use of national initiatives to improve literacy. A new co-ordinator has provided training and helped to make teachers aware of the importance of developing literacy and oracy skills. Inspectors found evidence of good practice to improve spelling, reading, writing and speaking skills in the majority of subjects.

Modern foreign languages: French and German

Provision in French is **satisfactory** and in German **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in German represent very good achievement
- GCSE results in French improved markedly in 2004
- Marking is inconsistent
- Arrangements for French and German for top sets in Years 8 and 9 hinder the progress of pupils
- Several disaffected pupils in Year 11 lower sets disrupt the learning of others
- The monitoring of teaching and marking have not been careful enough: both are too variable

Commentary

78. All pupils learn French from Years 7 to 11. German is taught only in top sets. In Years 8 and 9 French and German are taught in alternate weeks. No German was taught in these years during the inspection; standards are judged from analysing work. All pupils take GCSE in French, and German is available as a GCSE option choice.

French

79. By the end of Year 9 in 2004, teacher assessments of standards in French matched the national average. Inspection evidence confirms this overall judgement. Middle ability French sets are working at broadly average standards for this time of the year. As in German,

standards in upper sets are not as high as is usually expected of higher attaining pupils, because of the reduced lesson time. Pupils form short sentences based on a model. Speaking varies from good to hesitant. In lower sets standards are a little below average but most pupils form short sentences from memory. Overall achievement is satisfactory.

80. In 2003, GCSE results in French were significantly above the national average for boys, but pupils did not do as well in French as in their other subjects. Results were much better in 2004. All Year 11 took French and results were significantly better than recent national averages. In lessons, standards are average, overall. Several classes have suffered in previous years from staff turnover. Achievement in lessons is satisfactory overall but varies from very good to unsatisfactory in individual lessons, in line with teaching. Examples of good achievement were seen, where the teacher's strong discipline, good teaching and extensive use of French enabled the full use of learning time. In Year 11 lower sets, incidents of silly behaviour by several pupils disrupted the learning of others.

German

81. In 2004, teachers judged that standards at the end of Year 9 matched those nationally expected. Pupils' written work is broadly average in standard for the time of year, which is below expectations for upper sets because of the reduced teaching and learning time. Overall achievement is satisfactory to the end of Year 9. GCSE results in 2003 were very high - almost all gained the higher grades, A* to C. Results were even better in 2004, representing very good achievement. Current standards in Year 11 German are above average. Achievement in lessons is good. Students read well with good accents. They understand agreements with correct endings and personal pronouns and can abstract meaning well from taped German spoken at rapid speed.

French and German

82. In both languages, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve in line with others in their sets. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and in line with the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in French and German in the main school. In French it varies from excellent to unsatisfactory. In good to excellent lessons, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, pace is slick and every minute well used. Most teachers adapt tasks and questioning to give support to those who need it and extend the most able. Teachers are mostly good or competent linguists. Most have good relationships with pupils, use French or German extensively and ensure that pupils speak in the foreign language. When teaching is unsatisfactory too much English is used, the teacher expects too little and pupils do not make enough progress, or the teacher is slow to overcome silly behaviour and too much learning time is disrupted. Marking is inconsistent. Whilst much is helpful, too many errors are uncorrected in some work and too much work marked by pupils is inaccurate and unchecked.
83. Leadership and management are good. A relatively new subject leader has initiated good improvement, which overall since the last inspection is satisfactory. GCSE results improved significantly in 2004. Pupil tracking, new schemes of work and improved departmental documentation are in place. Teaching and marking have not been monitored carefully enough. Accommodation is good and resources satisfactory. Pupils continue to have limited access to computers in class time.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE are well above average

- The achievement of pupils is very good, especially across Years 7 to 9
- Provision for ICT in mathematics is unsatisfactory
- Tracking of pupil performance using data is good, but information obtained is insufficiently used for enabling pupils to know how to improve and in the planning of lessons
- The lack of a properly constructed numeracy across the curriculum policy restricts the development and use of mathematics in other subjects
- Temporary staffing arrangements limit co-ordination and effective leadership

Commentary

84. The high results reported at the last inspection have been maintained. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are consistently well above the national average. Increasing numbers of pupils are attaining the higher grades. Even though pupils have above average standards in mathematics on entry into the school, achievement is very good. GCSE results also are consistently well above the national average, both for all schools and for boys. In 2004, results show marked improvement on results in 2003. Compared with pupils' results at the end of Year 9, achievement at GCSE is good and, relative to their standards on entry into the school, achievement is very good for pupils of all ethnic backgrounds.
85. Work seen does not match these standards, especially in Years 10 and 11, where it is above, rather than well above, average. The very strong performance which is general at the end of Year 9 is sustained through upper sets but is not evident in other classes. Higher-attaining pupils are being appropriately stretched and progress very well. Pupils in lower sets, partly because of the temporary staffing situation, are not being challenged appropriately and their achievement is just satisfactory. Results which exceed the standards seen also reflect the extra help pupils receive before examinations. Pupils with special educational needs are enabled to progress as effectively as others in their classes through the good encouragement given by learning support staff who liaise well with teachers.
86. Learning is good overall. Most pupils are extremely co-operative, attentive, and willing to learn. A small minority take the opportunity to cause disruption, holding back the progress of others. Teachers are knowledgeable and communicate well, though real excitement for the subject is rarely transmitted. Teaching is good overall. Clear emphasis on presentation of work and on recording stages in working out play a big part in the pupils' success. However, lesson planning takes little account of the variety of needs of pupils within a class; even within classes grouped by ability there is a range of need. Teaching styles concentrate on working towards examination success, investigative work is limited and, as a consequence, interpretation of data is often partial. Some spreadsheets and word processing are evident in GCSE coursework projects, but use of ICT within mathematics is unsatisfactory, being significantly underdeveloped and not meeting National Curriculum requirements, in spite of an ICT facility being within the suite of mathematics rooms. Much marking of work is done by the pupils themselves and, whilst checked by the teachers, books contain few diagnostic comments of how work could be further improved. Homework is consistently and effectively set, enabling pupils to further their skills beyond the basic school day.
87. The school has been faced with difficult staffing problems in mathematics for over a year, including the long-term absence of the subject leader. Developments, identified in audit or at the previous inspection, are held back; with the result that leadership is unsatisfactory. Schemes of work still contain no references to use of ICT. While the recording of data from examinations is good, target-setting for improving learning is restricted to the provision of grades or levels. Documentation needs reorganising, and there is no supportive handbook on cross-curricular numeracy. The acting subject leader copes with a busy timetable and provides important support for colleagues and pupils. Day-to-day management is satisfactory. Performance management is satisfactory, though teachers have few opportunities to benefit by observing each other in the classroom. Since the last inspection, overall improvement is satisfactory: high results have been maintained, in spite of staffing difficulties. A recently acquired interactive whiteboard is proving a valuable addition to resources. Academically this

is a strong department and, once staffing difficulties are resolved, it should again be able to move forward.

Mathematics across the curriculum

88. Most pupils have good overall numerical and mathematical skills and can apply their knowledge effectively to work in other subjects. Competence in numeracy is reinforced in all year groups in mathematics, through mental arithmetic, use of calculators, in written calculations and in graphic display. Extra support is provided in Year 7 for lower-attaining pupils, and a lunchtime clinic is available for any pupil who encounters difficulties. Higher-attaining pupils are adept at the use of formulae and basic trigonometry and apply these readily in complex problems. They interpret graphical data effectively and many understand how to calculate standard deviations.
89. Subject departments have references to numeracy in their schemes of work. Extensive and effective application of numeracy occurs in geography, business, economics, and design and technology, in which CAD/CAM simulations are based on mathematical relationships. However, opportunities to use numeracy are missed in some subjects, including art and physical education. Training has been provided and a numeracy audit undertaken but there is no composite working document for numeracy across the curriculum. Without this, teachers in other subjects do not have appropriate guidance and cannot co-ordinate approaches.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment throughout the school are high
- The teaching and assessment of science are effective in preparing pupils well for national examinations
- Attainment in physics is not as good as in other science subjects
- External assessment data are analysed and used well to plot pupil progress and set targets for the next stage
- Not enough use is made of computers by pupils in science and there is no provision for data logging
- Teachers do not plan carefully enough for the full range of pupils in each class, particularly for those with special educational needs and for those of high attainment

Commentary

90. In 2003, the results at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average and very high compared with pupils of similar attainment in Year 6. In recent years results have been especially good at the higher National Curriculum levels. Achievement is very good up to the end of Year 9. Most progress very well in lessons with a small number of those with special educational needs making just satisfactory progress.
91. GCSE science subjects have been very differently provided from the usual pattern in comprehensive schools. Until recently, pupils studied at least one science subject taken either as a single science course or chosen from biology, chemistry and physics as separate subjects, and from which a second or even a third could be chosen. They achieved well and the overall science GCSE results have been well above the national average and the average for boys. No differences are apparent between pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. In 2004, results included a very high percentage of A* to C grades. All pupils gained at least a pass grade, showing very good achievement for lower attaining pupils. Results in chemistry have been

better than those in biology. Physics results have been lowest; pupils have not done as well in physics as in their other non-science subjects. From September 2004 all pupils are taking a double award science course. This is a promising start in the necessary ongoing review of the best science provision for this comprehensive group of pupils.

92. Standards are well above average by Year 9. Pupils achieve very well. Most keep neat and accurate records of their work and are especially skilful and confident in processing numerical data and plotting graphs. They use technical vocabulary correctly, explain their ideas fluently and handle difficult concepts such as energy transfer in the living world. They understand the principles of scientific investigations, and carry out procedures effectively. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average, overall, but vary across subjects, being best in chemistry, as in a Year 11 lesson in which pupils recalled effectively the relative reactivity series and achieved well in applying this to the extraction of metals. Pupils' high-level numerical skills help them to attain well in physics. However, too many lessons adopt the same approaches, so that use of worksheets, for example, becomes routine and pupils are not challenged in interesting ways. Emphasis on key points is effective in biology. Overall, most pupils achieve well in lessons and it is likely that, with revision and extra help before GCSE examinations, they will match or exceed their target grades and results will again be well above average.
93. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have very good specialist knowledge and know how to prepare pupils well for external testing. Most lessons include a suitable range of activities delivered at a crisp pace to keep pupils on task. However, extra support for some or challenge for the learning of more able pupils is sometimes lacking. In the best lessons, learning outcomes are made explicit at the beginning and time is spent at the end to summarise what pupils have achieved. Books are marked very conscientiously, using the agreed school system, but pupils could benefit from more guidance on how to improve their work further. Pupils have very good attitudes to science, which contribute significantly to the high standards achieved. They have the capacity to work more independently but are given relatively little opportunity to do this in class. Pupils are respectful and trusting in relationships with their teachers and they are especially tolerant and supportive of each other. A minority of pupils find it hard to concentrate and co-operate but this behaviour is generally linked to tasks which are not well matched to their capabilities or interests.
94. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader leads by example and manages the team of well-qualified teachers and technicians efficiently and supportively. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Rigorous and effective systems are in place for routine administration and for the collection and analysis of pupils' assessment data. In this way, pupil progress is well tracked and the work of the department is monitored and evaluated. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory, except for access to appropriate and specialist ICT. This deficiency was also noted at the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils now have timetabled lessons from Years 7 to 10 but not in Year 11
- Much teaching is good and most pupils achieve well in timetabled ICT lessons
- Standards are average by Year 11; pupils do not use ICT enough in other subjects and statutory requirements are not fully met in mathematics, science and design and technology
- Pupils have very good attitudes and behave well in lessons

Commentary

95. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above average. Achievement is good in ICT lessons. Standards are improving but competence in control and data logging is below expectations. Most pupils enter the school in Year 7 with average subject knowledge. Pupils reach above national levels due to much good teaching in timetabled ICT lessons, helping them to use equipment competently and effectively. They produce creative coursework projects in Year 9, using software programs. Some other subjects provide opportunities to extend skills, but ICT is under-developed as a tool for learning, particularly in the core subjects, and in art and design and technology.
96. Standards of pupils in Year 9 in ICT lessons and work seen are in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement overall. Pupils successfully use a variety of software programs and develop above-average skills of presenting information using desktop publishing and PowerPoint to design and present a travel booking system. Skills in applying spreadsheet formulae are above expectation because pupils use look-up tables particularly well. They have a less secure understanding of data logging and control technology and do not use software enough to solve practical problems in other subjects.
97. The new GCSE course in Year 10 has made a good start. Pupils are progressing well in lessons. However, pupils' overall achievement by the end of Year 11 is only just satisfactory because, although it is good in timetabled ICT, business studies and economics lessons, it is unsatisfactory in mathematics, science and design and technology, where provision does not meet statutory requirements. Pupils make good use of the Internet for research in several subjects, but mostly for homework.
98. Teaching and learning are good in timetabled ICT lessons from Years 7 to 10. Very good features include teachers' supportive relationships with pupils and effective planning that uses available time well. Teachers ensure that all pupils can successfully tackle tasks, and learning support staff effectively help pupils with special needs to make good progress. Higher-attaining pupils find projects challenging and interesting. Teachers use their good subject expertise to support and guide pupils, and mark work regularly and constructively.
99. Leadership and management are good. Stable specialist staffing is a very good feature. Teachers monitor and assess pupils' work well within timetabled ICT lessons. No difference is noted in the achievement of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. Since the previous inspection ICT has been better timetabled, with more lessons and improved equipment. However, improvement is just satisfactory overall because use of ICT in other subjects has been slow to develop. A new steering group has made a good start in implementing the National Curriculum strategy. Recent investment in interactive whiteboards has made ICT more available, but access to facilities is still difficult for some subjects. The potential to increase pupils' achievement is good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

100. Pupils have competent ICT skills that are sufficient to meet the curricular needs across several, but not all, subjects from Years 7 to 11. Subjects including music, physical education, business studies, economics and history make imaginative and constructive use of ICT to improve pupils' achievement. ICT is not used sufficiently in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology and geography. Despite significant increases in accommodation and equipment since the last inspection, pupils' progress in many subjects, whilst satisfactory, is not as good as it could be. Further staff training is planned.

HUMANITIES

Provision in classical studies (classical civilisation and Latin), geography and history was inspected in detail. Religious education is also provided but was inspected separately as this is a Catholic school.

Classical studies

101. Latin is provided for all in Year 7, for top sets in Years 8 and 9 and as a GCSE option choice. Classical civilisation is introduced and provided for all other classes in Years 8 and 9, and as a GCSE subject. There is also some teaching of Greek at the end of Year 9
102. Leadership and management of classics, including Latin and classical civilisation, are good and help pupils to achieve well. The subject leader has made raising standards to their former level a priority and is succeeding in this. He managed the difficult period when there was little staff stability well and has built a successful team. His monitoring of teaching helps the professional development of his colleagues as well as having a positive effect on standards. The department has a comprehensive scheme of assessment and pupils know how well they are doing and what their targets are in national examinations. The subject leader has also established links with a local primary school where he teaches pupils in Year 6, using a course-book for this age group. Although the accommodation is limited, it has been decorated with pictures and posters to give these rooms an identity and to act as reference material for pupils. Resources are adequate. Latin and classical civilisation were not included in the last inspection report, so progress since that time cannot be reported.

Classical civilisation

The provision in classical civilisation is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of interesting topics to study
- Well planned teaching stimulates pupils
- Pupils achieve well
- Marking is not consistent between parallel classes

Commentary

103. GCSE results were average for the last reported year. This was better than in 2003, when the many staffing difficulties in the previous two years had adversely affected the standards attained. The staffing situation is now stable. Standards seen in Years 9 and 11 during the inspection were average and are rising, as a result of well-planned teaching. Pupils of all ethnic backgrounds achieve well. Those with special educational needs are supported effectively. Pupils have a good grasp of the main themes of the texts that they are studying. Some pupils drew upon their past experience of classical studies to contrast the way that the god of the sea is treated by Virgil and Homer. Pupils realise the importance of giving references to support their assertions. They are encouraged to discuss moral and social issues in the texts, and Year 11 pupils made very thoughtful comments about the way that Aeneas behaves towards other characters in the story.
104. Written work is set regularly and is well planned to help pupils develop an analytical approach to the subject. It is marked regularly. However, although much of the marking contains helpful, detailed comments that help pupils to improve their work, this is not always the case. Pupils use the Internet to research topics and a Year 9 class had produced attractive posters about the Trojan War using their skills in word-processing and computer graphics. Teaching and learning are good. The teachers have an excellent grasp of the subject matter and an obvious enthusiasm that stimulates pupils. In a very good lesson the teacher challenged all pupils appropriately and his high expectations helped them to achieve well. Pupils are very responsive in lessons and enjoy the work set for them. They work in a purposeful manner and most need little or no encouragement to get down to work.

Latin

The provision for Latin is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is well managed and this helps pupils to achieve well
- Standards are rising as a result of staffing problems being resolved
- The use of the Internet as a research tool is well established
- Not all teachers are successful at fully engaging pupils in lessons

Commentary

105. GCSE results were average in the last reported year: achievement is good. Standards are rising after a dip caused by the difficulty of finding suitable staff during the last few years. During this inspection the standards attained by pupils in Years 9 and 11 were average. All pupils gain a good knowledge of vocabulary and higher attaining pupils quickly grasp how the endings of words show their function in a sentence - for example, pupils in Year 7 saw that *-m* on the end of a noun made it the object of the sentence. Work is well planned and the stimulating course book helps pupils to build on previous learning and achieve well. No differences were observed in the achievement of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds.
106. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils are given interesting tasks and are challenged appropriately. In a lesson for pupils in Year 7 there were different levels of difficulty in a vocabulary test so that all pupils could do work that was suited to them. In a good lesson in Year 10, pupils had researched the topic of the Egyptian goddess Isis on the Internet. This had stimulated their interest in the belief patterns of the ancient world and one or two pupils drew thoughtful parallels between Isis and Osiris and the Virgin Mary and Jesus. The teacher skilfully led pupils into refining their translations into idiomatic English. However, not all lessons had this level of involvement and challenge. For example, when questions were not well directed to assess how much pupils had grasped, their interest flagged and they achieved less well than they did in other lessons. Written work is planned well to aid the achievement of pupils. As in classical studies, the marking is rather variable and not all contains enough useful pointers that pupils can use to raise their standards.
107. Learning is enhanced by trips to places of classical interest, for example, Fishbourne Roman Palace and the British Museum, and visits to the school by an author of classical stories. The writing of pupils in Year 10 is enhanced through arrangements with a 'pen-friend' in the Vatican who exchanges e-mails about topics of classical interest. Pupils also have electronic access to the subject leader, which helps them keep up with their work.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average: pupils achieve very well
- Teaching and learning are very good
- Very good opportunities for fieldwork strengthen pupils' understanding
- Very good leadership and management have ensured very good improvements since the last inspection
- Access to computers is limited

Commentary

108. The GCSE results for 2004 were well above the national averages both for all schools and for boys. A significant proportion of pupils achieved results above their predicted grades, indicating very good achievement. This is because of the very good teaching they receive and

the high level of independent learning which they undertake. Results have been similarly high over the past three years. No differences in achievement are noted related to pupils' ethnic background. The standard of work in lessons at an early stage of Year 11 is above national expectations; for example, pupils understand what happens at plate boundaries and how fold mountains are formed. Very good marking and assessment lift the standard of written work. Coursework standards are well above average and indicate that results will be similarly high at the end of this year. Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work show that the standard achieved by the end of Year 9 is above national expectations, reflecting good achievement from standards on entry in Year 7 which are broadly average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve as well as other pupils because of the good support they receive during lessons and in their spare time.

109. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, with some excellent features. The expertise and good subject knowledge of the teachers challenge the thinking skills of the pupils and encourage them to ask perceptive questions. In a lesson on economic development in less economically developed countries, one pupil wanted to know why governments do not just print more money. A wide range of teaching styles is used to meet the needs of all pupils. Starter exercises are effectively used to set a very brisk pace to lessons and result in much work being covered. Homework is regularly set and thoroughly marked, with pointers for improvement. Although a newly acquired white board is being used in some lessons, computers are not available in classrooms for pupils' use. However, their work contains ample evidence of the use of computers to enhance their learning outside lessons. The enthusiasm of the staff, very good management skills and generally good behaviour of the pupils, create a very good atmosphere for learning and enjoyment of lessons. Planning includes additional activities for gifted and able pupils and staff recognise the need to use these more.
110. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The subject leader has a very clear vision for achieving high standards and ensuring that the pupils appreciate the relevance of the subject to real life situations. Dedication and commitment to the department and the school characterise the excellent role model she provides. Documentation is thorough. Good resources are well matched to topics and used effectively by staff. Fieldwork provision for all pupils is better than in most schools. The high quality of displays, including up to date newspaper reports on topics being studied, enhances the learning environment. Close liaison with staff and very good support for whole school policies such as literacy, numeracy, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, help to give the subject a valuable role within the school. Commitment to progress has enabled very good improvements since the last inspection. Assessment is well used. Results are much better. Staffing difficulties have been resolved. Teaching has improved substantially. Staff use a variety of styles to meet the needs of all pupils. Schemes of work have been revised and fieldwork improved. Progress has been made in the use of ICT but there are limitations due to accommodation in a mobile unit. These are being addressed.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and learning
- Results are average in GCSE examinations and standards are improving
- Relationships are strongly positive, enabling pupils to have positive attitudes to learning
- Good leadership and management have been effective in improving teaching and learning and in raising achievement

- Resources do not fully meet the needs of a variety of learning groups or give choices for independent learning

Commentary

111. GCSE results are broadly average. History is a popular subject and pupils achieve well in history, as they do overall. While the proportion of high grades (A* to C) gained is a little better than in boys' schools nationally, it is not as high as in the other humanities subjects, such as geography and religious education. This is because of the wider ability range of pupils who choose history for GCSE. All pupils successfully gain a graded result. This reflects well on the achievement of pupils of all ethnic backgrounds and those with special educational needs.
112. Inspection findings, based on a broad range of evidence, show a clear trend of improvement. By Year 9, most pupils achieve average standards, with a quarter doing better than this. Achievement is good. Pupils demonstrate a good sense of chronology and they know causes and effects of events of different periods of history. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to achieve well. In lessons, standards match those nationally and sometimes exceed them. They build on their previous knowledge and understanding and use technical language well most of the time. They question historical sources effectively to extract information. They identify reasons and explain events very well, developing their historical skills of enquiry and interpretation. Orally, pupils show very good understanding of complex issues, such as the beginnings of wartime alliance, but their written work is not as well developed.
113. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good command of their subject and they use a variety of effective teaching styles, including role-play and drama, which enable pupils to acquire new historical knowledge and deepen their understanding. Their consistently detailed planning is closely linked to the scheme of work. They teach historical terminology and skills systematically and cover examination requirements well. They provide very effective challenge, coupled with high expectations of behaviour and standards of work. Virtually all pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning; most collaborate well and contribute actively to their own learning, supporting their good achievement. On occasion, younger, less able pupils are unsettled and challenging, especially if activities do not interest them, with the result that the teacher's class management skills are stretched. A few remain dependent on the teacher. Teachers set a brisk pace for learning and good use is made of the interactive white board. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give helpful comments. Assessment arrangements are good and the progress of pupils is maintained effectively, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Valuable links are made with literacy. For example, in a lesson in Year 9 on the slave trade, Rudyard Kipling's poem, *The White Man's Burden* was compared well with a poem by Henry Labouchere, *The Brown Man's Burden*. The comparison raised awareness of issues about stereotypes and racism. However, links with numeracy and citizenship are not always clearly made, which reduces opportunities to build pupils' skills further.
114. Leadership and management are both good. The subject leader is enthusiastic, has a clear vision about what needs doing and how to go about it. Performance management is in place and used well. Teamwork and relationships are good, providing good role models for pupils. The scheme of work makes good links with other areas of the curriculum and history contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision is further enriched through visits to places of historical interest such as battlefields of Europe. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The scheme of work now incorporates numeracy and ICT. The quality of teaching and learning is improved and the lessons have learning objectives, though these are not always reviewed at the end of the lesson. Results are regularly compared with those nationally and specific targets set for improvement.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

The provision in design and technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Too little time is provided in Years 7 to 9 for pupils to cover the National Curriculum
- Good teaching enables good learning that, in part, overcomes some of shortage of time in Years 7 to 9, but overall achievement is unsatisfactory
- Accommodation is poor, with barely adequate resources restricting the range of the curriculum, as at the last inspection
- GCSE results are well above the national average, as time allocation in Years 10 and 11 is adequate and teaching is good
- Good relationships and pupils' capacity to work hard enables achievement to be satisfactory overall, despite the restrictions

Commentary

115. GCSE results in 2003 were well above those of all schools nationally and boys' schools. Results improved further in 2004 and were very high relative to those in recent years. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average. By the end of Year 9, standards are in line with expectation for the parts studied but, as the programmes of study are not covered as required, standards are too low. They are higher in making skills than in designing, which is weak.
116. The progress of all pupils across Years 7 to 9 is limited by the time available, which is very low. Achievement in lessons is satisfactory, but year after year they fall behind, so that at the end of Year 9 they have not achieved what they should, or could, overall. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory among all groups of pupils. In Years 10 and 11, the achievement of the relatively few pupils who take the subject is very good because they catch up much of what they missed earlier and have high standards. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. This, coupled with the good relationships that they have with their teachers, enables them to complete tasks effectively and to work hard in class as well as at home. The use of computer aided design and manufacture is developing but its physical location away from the workshops means that it cannot be included in the processes taking place in ordinary lessons. In consequence, pupils in the early years do not use it as they should. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 can only incorporate it into their GCSE coursework if they come at lunchtime or after school.
117. Teaching is generally good, and sometimes very good. Lessons are well prepared and planned to raise standards. Pace and challenge are good. Pupils learn well the topics they study. Teachers establish very good standards of behaviour and discipline which enable a lot to be achieved, so attainment is higher than might be expected, when considering the shortage of time. Pupils listen well and follow instructions carefully. In the GCSE years extensive planning enables pupils to progress rapidly and catch up on the missing skills of the earlier years. This, together with the good learning enabled by very good attitudes, enables pupils to make coursework of high quality, which gives them access to the highest grades. They are less secure in the design and theory areas of the examination because their background understanding is weak.
118. In each of the first three years the curriculum is unsatisfactory. This is because there is insufficient time and, despite the efforts of the teachers, they cannot cover the required curriculum as they should. The major weakness is the underdevelopment of pupils' design

skills. Pneumatics, microprocessors, using ICT to design sub-systems and modern Smart materials are some of the areas not covered well enough. Assessment is weak in Years 7 to 9 because pupils too often do not know how to further improve and how their performance compares with national standards using National Curriculum levels. In addition, the GCSE curriculum is narrow, when compared with most other boys' schools.

119. Day-to-day management of the subject is now satisfactory. Since the last inspection the scheme of work has been significantly developed and, as far as teachers are able, many of the improvements needed have been made. What is poor is the leadership of the subject at whole school level, where the key issues raised at the two last inspections have not been tackled. The school has not succeeded on a number of occasions in raising money to improve the accommodation. Having completed the sports centre, the school has identified this as its next imperative using the surplus accommodation now available.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art

Provision in art is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well by Year 11
- Provision in Years 7 to 9 does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, which limits pupils' achievement
- Unsatisfactory management of the department has led to insufficient development since the previous inspection
- Schemes of work for art do not properly take into account national strategies and initiatives
- The good teaching of key art skills and techniques is supporting pupils' learning well
- Good leadership in Years 10 and 11 is focused well on raising standards in GCSE examinations

Commentary

120. GCSE results have shown a continuous trend of good improvement. In 2003, when compared with all schools, results were well above average for pupils gaining grades A* to C, and passes at the highest grades, A* and A. When compared with boys' performance, results were very high. In 2004, standards continued to be well above average when compared with all schools and boys only. However, the percentage of pupils gaining the highest grades has declined slightly over the past three years, and in 2004 there were no A* passes. Nevertheless, achievement of pupils in GCSE examinations is good overall, among pupils of all ethnic backgrounds. Results reflect very well on the achievement of pupils with special educational needs. In the work and lessons seen during the inspection, standards were above average by Year 11, in which pupils' achievement is good. Particularly good achievement was seen in a Year 11 lesson because of an effective focus on group assessment of the pupils' own work. They developed a much sharper understanding of what was required, and how to improve. They understood how and why they were achieving well.
121. Teacher assessments of Year 9 pupils in 2003 were above average and well above average for boys, with a good proportion attaining highly. This represents good achievement from average standards on entry in Year 7. Although no national data for standards in 2004 are yet available, attainment has improved slightly. Standards seen during the inspection show pupils' attainment to be above average by Year 9, and they achieve well. However, the main focus in the work is on drawing and painting, with little three-dimensional work. This was a criticism at the previous inspection, concerning which there has not been enough improvement.

Consequently, the pupils' breadth of art experiences is narrow and their achievement in relation to other pupils nationally is unsatisfactory.

122. Teaching is good throughout all year groups. Expectations are high and the pupils are challenged well. Teachers share their expertise well with the pupils. Nevertheless, progress in Years 7 to 9 is sometimes adversely affected by the poor use of time. For example, in an excellent Year 7 lesson on painting techniques, there was not enough time for the pupils to complete the task properly. This was a disappointment for the pupils, who were very well involved in their work. Overall, learning is good throughout Years 7 to 11. Most pupils have good attitudes to learning and they are given a thorough grounding in the key artistic skills and techniques necessary for them to make good progress. This approach is a strength of the department. However, although the pupils are enabled to achieve well technically, there are few opportunities for them to develop creative and imaginative approaches. This is an unresolved issue from the previous inspection. Teachers' assessment of their work is good and supportive. Pupils know the standards they are achieving, and what they must do to improve.
123. Leadership is satisfactory overall. It is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but good in Years 10 and 11. A key strength lies in the effectiveness of the team of art teachers in enabling pupils, by Year 11, to achieve well at GCSE. However, management is unsatisfactory overall because senior management has been ineffective in its monitoring of the department. Important issues from the previous inspection have not been resolved. Management has not ensured a proper scheme of work is in place in Years 7 to 9, which ensures full coverage of the National Curriculum. Not enough consideration has been given to relating the work in art to national strategies such as those for literacy, numeracy, ICT or WRL, which are important parts of the pupils' broader personal and educational development. Consequently, improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Music

The quality of provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Choral work is of a very high standard
- Teachers have high aspirations and expectations, and very good knowledge of the subject
- Pupils demonstrate a very strong commitment to extra-curricular activities which are extensive and make a significant contribution to the standards achieved
- Teachers' workloads are too extensive, resulting in insufficient time for management
- Lesson planning, assessment and the monitoring of performance lack rigour

Commentary

124. In lessons and work seen standards were above average and achievement good by Year 9. However, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are well below average. This is due to a misinterpretation of the National Curriculum levels and is not an accurate assessment of standards. Teachers now have a much better understanding of the requirements and levels are being incorporated into the new units of work. The 2004 GCSE results were well below those achieved by the school as a whole and a cause of some disappointment to staff and parents. However, analysis shows that the results were broadly in line with those achieved by boys in all schools nationally. The majority of pupils achieved a grade in music not dissimilar to those achieved in other subjects. There is a significant range of achievement amongst pupils in Years 10 and 11 but, in lessons overall, standards are average and achievement satisfactory, including for pupils with special educational needs. No difference is apparent in the achievement of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. Standards are well above average in extra-curricular musical activities throughout the school and many pupils achieve high

standards in individual lessons with peripatetic tutors. Choral work is of a very high standard in which more able pupils perform exceedingly well.

125. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and high expectations. As a result, students develop confidence. Singing is particularly well developed and most students are able to use sol-fa to improve their sight-singing skills. Rhythmic control is well developed and students respond enthusiastically to teaching which uses a variety of methods to help them learn the principles of notation and musical form. Effective use is made of ICT to reinforce learning and enable pupils to experience a variety of musical styles. Year 7 students responded very well when asked to listen to and adopt vocal improvisations from a composition by Berio. Year 9 students demonstrated a good understanding of the Blues and had sufficient understanding of the musical form to make up their own improvisations using keyboards and guitar.
126. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall. Several students are talented in composition and performance, whilst others are having difficulty in reaching minimum standards. This presents a challenge for teachers in meeting the needs of the group as a whole. As yet, there is not enough rigour in lesson planning and in the assessment of individual students to ensure their needs are met and that they can all make good progress. Students do not have enough support in helping them to understand what they need to do to improve their work.
127. The leadership of the department is very good but its management is unsatisfactory. Teachers have high aspirations and are dedicated in their desire to achieve high musical outcomes in terms of performance and commitment. They work very well as a team. The department has undertaken a realistic analysis of its current position and understands how it needs to move forward. Schemes of work are currently being revised. The department recognises the need to improve planning, assessment and the monitoring of performance. However, the workload of staff is a significant barrier to achieving these aims. Extra-curricular activities are extensive and make a significant contribution to the standards achieved in music at all stages. The school, justifiably, has a national profile for the quality of its choral work. The two teachers undertake a significant amount of extra teaching outside the school day with activities planned every day before school, during lunchtimes and after school. This greatly reduces the time available to prepare lessons, carry out assessments, analyse data, monitor performance and plan for developments. Little administrative support is provided for the department and peripatetic tutors are underused in contributing to raising standards overall.
128. The overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The new schemes of work place greater emphasis on the contribution of music from different cultures although the implementation of this will need to be monitored and evaluated. The provision of keyboards is now adequate and resources have been improved by the addition of a well-resourced computer room.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils reach well above average standards and achieve very well in lessons and at GCSE
- The excellent extra-curricular and games enrichment programmes enable pupils to follow their chosen sports to county and national levels
- Excellent vision and strategic thinking in the leadership have resulted in very good improvement since the last inspection and good implementation of sports college requirements
- Pupils' learning throughout the school is enhanced by their involvement in sport

Commentary

129. GCSE results in 2003 were above the national averages for all schools and for boys. Results improved markedly in 2004. Pupils achieve very well relative to their ability especially those who are very involved in extra-curricular sport. When pupils arrive at the school they are of average attainment. Standards reached by pupils in Year 9, close to the beginning of the year, are above average and well above average in rugby. Pupils are achieving very well. They have very good ball handling skills and apply strategies and tactics successfully, adapting them to a range of sports. They improve their own and each other's performance effectively by observing and coaching.
130. Standards reached by pupils in Year 11 are well above average. Their skills have become more refined and they play games to a very good standard. Their understanding of rugby is exceptional and they compete at the highest level. Pupils who are not inclined towards team games or contact sports reach above average standards in fitness training, and average standards in tennis and badminton. They also have opportunities to follow a range of other activities such as swimming and golf. Those pupils who take GCSE in physical education reach above average standards in theory and well above average in practical aspects. The higher attaining pupils have very good depth of knowledge. Their advanced practical ability and rich experiences in competition add depth to their work and enliven their exemplars in their writing. Pupils with special educational needs in all years achieve very well. The teachers know them well and alter tasks to meet their needs if appropriate. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also achieve very well.
131. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers' excellent subject knowledge ensures that pupils learn at a fast pace and understand how to analyse, evaluate and improve their own skills. They are particularly skilled at motivating pupils and engendering a desire to strive for excellence. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to engage pupils who are unable to take part in lessons in learning. Question and answer sessions are used well to consolidate learning and provoke thought about how to apply skills and strategies. Assessment is well used. New plans to use a base line to track progress will strengthen arrangements in earlier years. Not all teachers use National Curriculum levels in their teaching. Marking of GCSE homework is mostly constructive but varies among teachers. This has already been monitored and is about to be addressed. The teachers provide an intellectually and physically challenging environment to meet the needs and interests of pupils, whilst effectively developing their personal and social skills.
132. Leadership is excellent. There is a clear vision and a strong ethos that reflects the aims of the school and the sports college plans. The teachers are dedicated to strive for the highest standards. The extensive extra-curricular programme is partly chosen by pupils, but also continues to uphold the excellent reputation of extensive fixtures and very high standards in rugby, cricket and athletics. Management is very good. It is reflective, self critical, well informed and quick to seize any advantage in national and local initiatives. The innovative

employment of Gap Year students and a primary link teacher add positively to raising standards. There has been a good move to add diversity to the curriculum ensuring that the interests of all pupils are met. The new sports hall is well used and is having a positive impact on improving basketball in particular. The old changing rooms have been refurbished. Improvement has been very good since the last inspection.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

Provision in business education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in recent examinations is excellent
- Marking is regular and comprehensive; however pupils are not always given clear targets for improvement
- Very high expectations and very good relationships support and encourage pupils' very positive attitudes towards business education
- Learning is very good as a result of very good teaching
- The department is very well led

Commentary

133. Standards are well above average in Year 11, judging from the work seen and pupils' responses in lessons. Pupils of all ethnic backgrounds make very rapid progress because of the very high teacher expectations and the very thorough planning and as a result achievement is very good. Pupils receive very careful and detailed examination preparation and revision and in recent years achievement by the end of the course has been excellent. GCSE examination results in 2003 were well above national averages, both for all schools and for boys, and this represents excellent achievement. In 2004 nearly all pupils secured an A* to C grade, a substantial improvement on the previous year. Business education is a very popular subject in Year 10, with over half of the year group studying the subject.
134. Learning is very good because of the very good teaching. This is based on very secure subject knowledge and an expectation that all will achieve highly. Teachers plan their lessons very well and a wide range of resources is used, including recent case study material and extensive study booklets. The whiteboards are particularly well used. The lively and positive learning environment is characterized by very good relationships and by very good behaviour and attitudes to work. Ample opportunities are provided to develop pupils' co-operative decision making and oral skills. In a Year 10 class the intensity with which the pupils worked was remarkable. Lessons have very good pace and challenge and, as a result, pupils' interest is very high. The marking of work is thorough and pupils receive comprehensive end of unit assessments. However, although some teachers give clear individual targets for improvement, practice in this is inconsistent.
135. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader has a clear vision, sense of purpose and very high aspirations for the subject. The team is very effective, evaluates its work and provides very strong support for the pupils of all backgrounds and abilities, including those with special educational needs, who achieve well. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and the schemes of work provide a very good framework for learning. ICT and numeracy opportunities are securely embedded in the planning. Departmental record keeping and assessment are very good. Although the rooms are not close together and some are rather small, the accommodation is satisfactory and is enhanced in two rooms by very good displays

of pupils' work. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection because achievement, pupils' response and teaching and learning are now all very good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

136. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught through separately timetabled lessons and augmented by early morning form times and topics covered in assemblies, which were all sampled during the inspection. Citizenship is covered, in part, in PSHE lessons.
137. Teaching and learning in PSHE lessons observed were consistently good. This is commendable, because many teachers (form tutors) are involved. A variety of relevant topics was taught, including health and drugs awareness education and study skills. Overall requirements are met, as learning is augmented through topics such as human relationships and sex education, which are covered in part in religious education and biology. Lessons included varied activities and ample opportunities through discussion for pupils to develop informed views of their own. At appropriate times careers education is included in lessons and supplemented by extra events, such as conferences and visits. PSHE lessons contribute well to pupils' personal development and their achievement. Early morning form times provide an orderly start to the day. While the time is short (15 minutes) generally, apart from registration, notices and a prayer, little happens. However, all reinforce the climate of very good relationships which support pupils' learning. Assemblies powerfully reinforce the very positive ethos of the school. Apart from worship (which is not within the remit of the inspection), they provide valuable opportunities to explore universal issues, and deepen pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In subjects such as history there is some good teaching of citizenship
- The planning of most curricular areas identifies opportunities to promote citizenship
- The regular tutor times develop pupils' knowledge of this area
- No analysis has been carried out to ensure that all elements of citizenship are covered systematically across relevant subjects
- Pupils are not always aware that they are being taught about citizenship

Commentary

138. The standards pupils reach are in line with national expectations in Years 9 and 11. Older pupils have clear views as to the value of the subject and participate well in lessons. Pupils understand the rights and responsibilities of living in a democratic society. They are well informed and argue in a reasoned and mature way. Pupils develop skills of enquiry and communication in most subjects. However, in discussion with pupils in Year 9 it was clear that they only had a hazy notion of what the term *citizenship* means. Teachers do not always make pupils aware that the topic being taught is part of the citizenship curriculum. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, and of all ethnic backgrounds achieve satisfactorily throughout.
139. During the inspection there was little direct teaching of citizenship. Most of what was seen was in lessons in other subject areas. Some good examples of this were history lessons about slavery and the Cold War. Other subjects, especially religious education, include citizenship issues in their planning. However, this good practice is the result of subject leaders' taking opportunities to incorporate citizenship issues, rather than through coherent planning throughout the school. Regular personal, social and health education sessions also contribute to the teaching of citizenship. Assemblies and visiting speakers add to pupils' knowledge. Pupils are very ready to take responsible action. They contribute to various charitable initiatives and each class chooses the charity it wants to support. There is a school council,

but pupils' views about its effectiveness varied. Some felt that they had a reasonable input and could affect what happened in the school, while others were less positive.

140. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. In a good Year 11 session, pupils crystallised their own views in a supportive atmosphere. The teacher's taking on the role of devil's advocate stimulated them to express their own opinions, which many did in a lucid way. The school fulfils its statutory duties about reporting and assessing the achievement of pupils, but it was clear from what pupils in Year 9 and Year 11 said during discussions that they did not have a clear idea of how well they were doing in the subject.
141. The leadership and management of citizenship are unsatisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has been in charge of the subject since the beginning of the academic year. He is keen to develop the subject but has not analysed subject plans to see which areas are covered and to identify gaps. Without this, future development will be haphazard. Assessment procedures are still in an early stage of development and do not give pupils a clear enough idea of how they are achieving in the subject. Resources for teaching the subject are adequate.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 14 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003 (latest year for which national comparisons are available).

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	100	74	33	17	43	26
Biology	4	25	63	0	11	5	20
Business studies	1	100	76	0	15	30	26
Chemistry	3	100	71	0	12	27	23
Classical studies	6	100	85	17	28	30	33
Communication studies	3	100	85	100	20	50	30
English literature	3	67	84	33	16	27	29
French	2	50	80	0	21	10	29
Design and technology	1	100	71	100	12	60	23
History	4	100	79	0	17	30	27
Information technology	16	63	66	0	10	18	21
Mathematics	8	38	59	13	16	13	21
Other social studies	1	100	66	0	12	20	22
Physics	5	100	65	0	12	26	21
Sociology	1	0	68	0	14	0	23
Sports/Physical education studies	1	100	71	100	8	50	23

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	6	100	98	17	42	70	82
Biology	20	100	96	25	35	76	75
Business studies	19	100	99	42	35	85	79
Chemistry	4	100	97	75	45	95	82
Classical studies	16	100	99	13	50	70	87
Economics	13	92	99	46	51	82	87
English literature	13	100	99	23	46	80	86
Design and technology	5	100	97	40	30	88	74
Geography	11	100	99	55	40	87	81
German	3	100	98	0	48	67	65
History	6	100	99	33	41	83	83

Information technology	27	93	95	7	24	62	69
Mathematics	20	100	96	55	53	89	87
Music	6	100	98	67	38	97	80
Other languages	1	100	97	100	66	120	93
Other social studies	5	100	96	20	37	68	77
Physics	8	100	96	50	43	80	81
Sports/Physical education studies	12	83	98	33	25	70	71

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature

English literature is provided at AS and A2 levels and was inspected in detail.

Provision for English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good; results in the A2 level course have improved in the last three years
- The level of subject expertise of teachers is strong
- Curricular planning and lesson planning are very thorough: teachers draw on a wide range of world literature
- Some lessons could be improved by the use of a seminar style to encourage greater exchange of ideas among students

Commentary

142. A2 level results in 2003 were average and in 2004 were a little better. They represent good achievement, relative to students' GCSE grades. Students do better in English literature than in many of their other subjects. Standards of work in lessons and in completed essays are above average in both Years 12 and 13. The interim grades for AS level in 2004 indicate a wide range of attainment, as is often the case when relatively large numbers opt for a subject they have enjoyed to GCSE level, but are broadly average overall.
143. Students' written work and contributions to discussion indicate that achievement is good for most, and for some it is very good. Students of all backgrounds achieve well. The quality of written assignments improves markedly during the course partly because of thorough guidance from experienced teachers and because many students are very well-motivated. A sample of coursework from the prose component of the A2 level examination indicates literary appreciation and criticism of a very high standard produced from sources as diverse as Maya Angelou's 'I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings' and Evelyn Waugh's 'Brideshead Revisited'. Students in lessons feel that they are making good progress in English.
144. Teaching and learning are good. In all lessons teachers reveal detailed knowledge of the texts being studied and communicate their own enthusiasms very effectively. The quality of marking and monitoring is of a high standard, particularly in the accuracy of grading students' performance relative to examination standards. In most lessons teachers use a formal whole class teaching style, partly because group sizes are large but also because teaching takes place mainly in ordinary classrooms rather than in an area which would allow more interaction. Interchange of ideas through discussion is limited. Nevertheless, teachers make good use of working in pairs, of students making presentations to the whole group and they expect that homework, including preparatory reading, be done regularly. All teachers have a good knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses. The thorough preparation of lessons

includes giving consideration to the most effective ways of stretching students who may have particular talents and of supporting those with particular learning needs.

145. The department is led and organised very well and works effectively as a team to maximise the success of students. Much thought has been given to curricular changes to meet the new examination requirements. Good planning and skilful teaching have led to a steady improvement in results from 2002 to 2004 to a point where it is now just above the national average. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

146. Most students entering the sixth form have good literacy skills. The school does not teach literacy separately but a module in communication skills is included in Year 12 general studies. Literacy skills are developed effectively within subjects as part of the examination courses. Literacy training received by teachers in the last school year has helped to reinforce their awareness of the ways in which students can be helped to plan and write better essays and to be encouraged to listen and think more deeply. Inspectors observed that in many lessons students were encouraged to develop oral skills by presenting their own research to the class group. Listening skills are very good. Students read widely and have well-developed research skills, which are notable in biology, geography and economics. Usually these are limited only by the resources available, although in design and technology students' analysis of research findings lacks clarity. Their writing is generally accurate and fluent but in French and German standards of writing are let down by inaccuracies in grammar. Some need help in writing for special purposes, as in history. Presentation is usually good. Teachers pay good attention to writing in their marking.

Modern foreign languages

French and German are provided at AS and A2 levels and German was inspected in detail. Work in French was sampled. AS level results in French, taken in recent years by a very few students, have been well below national averages; no students took A2 level examinations in 2003 and 2004. While current standards are below expectations in both the AS and A2 level lessons, students learn and achieve satisfactorily, overall. The main weakness is students' knowledge of grammar, so written work is below average. Teaching is satisfactory. Students hear fluent rapid French and their listening skills are broadly average.

German

Provision in German is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some imaginative teaching and tasks result in good oral improvement
- A worrying inconsistency in the quality of teaching prevents students from making the progress of which they are capable in some lessons
- Students work hard to improve their grammar
- Students are unclear about the level of their work in relation to the examination requirements

Commentary

147. Small numbers make national comparisons unreliable. In 2003, all three A2 level students gained a pass, but none attained a higher grade. In the last two years, AS level results have been among the poorest in the school.
148. In Year 12 lessons observed achievement was satisfactory overall. Students spoke confidently and with great accuracy from notes made from individual research, for example, comparing

Goethe with a modern German rap artist. However, extended writing and reading are below average; students' grammatical weaknesses result in written work which lacks accuracy and fluency. They are working hard to improve their grammar. The evidence of Year 13 work, by a single part-time student, is insufficient for inspection evaluation.

149. Teaching and learning, while satisfactory overall, are worryingly inconsistent. In good lessons German is used extensively. Imaginative, well-planned and sequenced activities promote confident and accurate use of new language structures. In unsatisfactory lessons, achievement is unsatisfactory because of excessive use of English and tasks which are too easy. Marking is generally detailed and helpful but the grading system, which encourages effort, does not make clear the level of work in relation to examinations.
150. Leadership and management are now good. A new subject leader, a very good role model, has improved schemes of work and guidance but teaching needs tighter monitoring. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

The inspection covered AS and A2 level courses in mathematics.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement at A2 level is very good: results are above average and improving
- A wide range of modules is taught, enabling students to study A2 level further mathematics
- The use of ICT is under-developed

Commentary

151. A2 level results in 2003 were above the national average and higher than this in 2004. Students' achievement in 2004, relative to their GCSE scores, is very good. A few students take AS level and gain moderate results. A small number of students take A2 level further mathematics, gaining very high results. Students of all backgrounds achieve equally well.
152. The standards of work seen were broadly consistent with results. Students achieve very well. The transition from the former pure mathematics modules to the new core syllabus is being smoothly managed. A variety of statistics, mechanics and decision mathematics modules is also taught, some to the very able students studying further mathematics. Year 12 students have generally good facility in determining equations of lines, the analysis of networks, and applying statistical techniques to regression. Year 13 students cope well with partial fractions and with integration techniques involving trigonometric and exponential functions, but work on momentum revealed misunderstandings by some. Not enough use is made of ICT in lessons.
153. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The teachers are experts in their subject, effective and have good rapport with the students. Most students progress from the school's own Year 11, but students from elsewhere join the courses and are assimilated quickly. Learning is particularly good in further mathematics, where some students are very able. In classes seen there was good interest and application, and students contribute readily. Independent study is encouraged through appropriate setting of work beyond lesson time. Work is regularly checked, though much marking is through student self-assessment. Beneficial as this is, weaknesses are not always picked up quickly enough, especially where a student may be experiencing particular difficulty.

154. Leadership and management are good. A suitable range of modules is provided, good relationships prevail, and sixth-formers are encouraged to help younger pupils in the Maths Clinic. Results are rising; improvement since the last inspection is good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

155. Overall, standards are well above average. Students' mathematical skills in most cases are more than sufficient to support their study in other subjects. Graphical work is usually of high quality, data interpretation is good, and calculations are confidently performed. Examples of good use of mathematics include work on heart rate monitoring in sports science, calculations in chemistry, and simulation of tool path movements using CAD/CAM in design and technology. In business studies, impressive work on break-even analysis was seen in a case study of the Glastonbury festival. Extensive applications of numeracy are evident in geography, ranging from use of isopleth and choropleth maps, to proportional circles, location quotients, and a wide variety of statistical techniques.

SCIENCE

AS and A2 level courses are provided in biology, chemistry and physics. The focus of this inspection was on biology. Chemistry and physics were also sampled. Teaching in chemistry was good, leading to good learning and achievement. Students were very well motivated and ready to ask, if they did not understand. Recent results have been above average at both AS and A2 levels, and students tend to do better at A2 level in this than in all their other subjects. The teaching seen in physics was also good. Students readily grasped the mathematics of radioactive decay; they learned and achieved well. Recent results have been above average at both AS and A2 levels. Students' performance at A2 level has been in line with that in their other subjects.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well overall and their results are above average
- Teaching is good, based on expert knowledge and the increasing use of innovative methods
- Assessment data are effectively used to support good student progress
- Students do not have enough access to reference materials, limiting the development of their independent research skills
- The provision and use of ICT are underdeveloped in the support of student learning

Commentary

156. Results at AS and A2 levels in 2003 are better than those nationally, and further improved in 2004. Students achieve well relative to their performance at GCSE and, at A2 level, achieve better than in most of their other subjects. The success of the teaching is reflected in the numbers studying biology, with over 35 students now on the AS level course, including a few from other schools. Results show no differences between students of different backgrounds.
157. In lessons, standards are generally above average and sometimes well above, as in a Year 12 lesson in which students explained the biochemistry of energy transfer through food chains and in a Year 13 lesson, in which they understood the quantitative aspects of environmental genetics. Achievement is good, assisted by students' good recall of earlier learning and readiness to apply this. Students have impressive research capability, as when they found out about sickle cell anaemia. Most take pride in all aspects of their work, applying themselves seriously in class and conscientiously completing homework to a good standard. Relationships

with their teachers are very mature and open. Students seek clarification and support as required. When given the chance they work very well with other individuals and within the whole group to find out new knowledge, present ideas and to question about the wider implications of a topic.

158. Teaching is consistently good. Teachers work as an effective team, sharing the benefits of the considerable experience and skills of some staff with new approaches to develop strategies for learning at this level. Teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge delivered with flair and challenge. Questioning is used well to build on earlier learning, to encourage students to work things out for themselves and to develop their understanding of more difficult ideas. At times, its effectiveness would be enhanced if students were given more time to consider their response before being asked to contribute. Work is suitably demanding, with excellent worksheets produced by teachers to support recording, encourage thinking and check comprehension. However, a shortage of up to date reference and extension resources limits students' independent reading and research. Practical work is generally effectively used but more consistent emphasis is needed at the start of Year 12 on the development of advanced practical skills and record-keeping. Students are very confident in handling the mathematical aspects of work. Work is marked regularly and students receive very detailed feedback on their performance. Overall assessment is based on a wide profile of tasks and tests and students feel well supported by this. Assessment information is well used to monitor teaching and learning.
159. Biology is led and managed with commitment and energy. Teachers have adapted their expertise well to the changing demands of examination and coursework requirements. Growing use is made of computers by teachers to present their lessons but further development in the provision and use of ICT resources is required so that students can enhance their learning in biology. While results and improvement since the last inspection are good, a more formalised approach to long-term planning and resource allocation would further support the growth of this popular and successful subject area.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology (ICT) is provided at AS and A2 levels and was inspected in detail.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results at AS level are well above average and A2 level results are improving
- Students have very positive attitudes and come to lessons with a commitment to learn
- Strong leadership and management of the department are leading to improvement in standards
- In most subjects not enough opportunities are provided for the use of ICT to enhance learning

Commentary

160. Results at A2 level are in line with recent national averages, showing a steady improvement over the last three years. Students do slightly less well in ICT than in most other subjects. Results at AS level in 2004 are well above recent national averages, and much improved over the previous year. Year 12 students do much better in ICT than in most other subjects.
161. Standards on the A2 level course are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. Students have good understanding of the importance of the ease of use of computers. Standards on the AS level course are above average and achievement is very good. Students are able to evaluate well the social impacts of ICT. This very good achievement is commendable; students have not taken the subject at GCSE. There are no differences in the

achievements of different groups of students.

162. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the work that students need to cover and are making good efforts to use ICT to prepare and present their lessons. The teachers create an environment in which the students are able to learn from their mistakes and by supporting each other. By using a variety of teaching methods, being clear about planned outcomes and encouraging greater student participation, the learning needs of all students are met. Very good resources and good accommodation support learning effectively.
163. Overall, management and leadership are very good. Monitoring of teaching including formal feedback is leading to an improvement in learning. Regular recorded departmental meetings contribute to a sharing of ideas that promotes good progress. The annual review of examination results and the tracking of students' performance are used to further improve achievement. Good improvement has been made on ICT courses. However, overall improvement since the previous inspection is just satisfactory. Teachers in other subjects are beginning to make good use of interactive whiteboards to prepare and present their lessons, but students do not make enough use of ICT to develop their subject learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

164. Students have access to ICT facilities in the sixth form centre, the library and by arrangement in subject areas. Most have adequate skills to cope with basic applications but have not learned ICT systematically for two years, because the subject has only recently been introduced into Year 10. Individually, students make satisfactory use of ICT in researching and presenting their work. Use of ICT is good in business studies, economics and physical education but little evident in most other subjects, except for research, as in art. Teachers are starting to make effective use of new whiteboards. Overall, the use of ICT to enhance learning across the curriculum is unsatisfactory, but the potential for its development is good.

HUMANITIES

Classical studies (Latin and classical civilisation), geography, history, government and politics and religious education are provided at AS and A2 levels. Classical studies, geography and history were inspected in detail. Religious education was inspected and reported on separately because this is a Catholic school.

Work in government and politics was also sampled. Teaching was variable, being very good in a Year 13 class in which students made considerable gains in understanding issues about feminism but just satisfactory, in line with students' learning, in a Year 12 lesson in which students were learning about constitutional reform. While results in recent years have varied, between just below to above average, achievement relative to GCSE grades has been satisfactory.

Classical studies

Provision in Latin and classical civilisation is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The best lessons are challenging, exciting and very effective
- A good programme of out-of-school activities enriches the curriculum
- The teaching encourages students to draw lessons from the past to illuminate current issues
- Marking does not always give students constructive help as to how to improve their work

Commentary

165. The subject leader leads and manages both Latin and classical civilisation well. He has created an effective team and his own high quality teaching provides a very good role model. In recent years, the school had had difficulties in recruiting suitable staff and there had been a succession of short-term appointments. This had an adverse effect on results. However, the department now has a full complement of suitably qualified full time teachers and standards are rising. Relationships are very good. Students are supported well, and their individual needs taken into account. Much marking is full and has comments that help students to attain higher grades, but this is not consistent. Extra-curricular visits, including residential trips to Hadrian's Wall, as well as trips to dramatic events such as the Greek plays, enrich learning. There is a good stock of high quality textbooks in the library for students who wish to do research as well as those within the department. The accommodation and other resources are adequate for efficient teaching.
166. Sixth formers enjoy and have a mature appreciation of the value of learning Latin and classical civilisation. They feel confident in the abilities of their teachers. These subjects were not included in the last inspection so improvement since then cannot be reported.

Latin

167. Over the last few years small numbers of students have taken examinations at AS and A2 levels. Results have been above average overall but, since groups have been so small, they cannot be compared reliably with results nationally. In Latin, there are currently no A2 level students. Standards in the AS level course seen at the inspection were in line with expectations and students were achieving well. They have a good knowledge of Roman Italy, their progress being assisted by their own research using the Internet. Their vocabulary is good, but their knowledge of grammar is not so secure. Effective challenge by the teacher and encouragement to talk about literary devices, for example, the simile, helps them to improve their understanding of set books.
168. Teaching and learning are good, occasionally very good. In the very good lessons there was a high level of expertise on the part of the teachers. Their challenging questions stimulated students and created a lively intellectual atmosphere as, for example, in a lesson on translation of a poem by Horace in which the teacher's knowledge of metric patterns and grammar enabled students to grasp difficult concepts. Occasionally time is not well judged or too much is spent on explanations. Students' written work shows an increasingly thoughtful and analytical approach.

Classical civilisation

169. Classical civilisation attracts a worthwhile number of AS and A2 level students each year. In the last reported year, results at A2 level were below the usual national average and low compared with other subjects in the school. Students' progress over the sixth form had been affected by staff turnover. However, AS level results for the last reported year were above average. Standards seen during the inspection were in line with expectations, in both Years 12 and 13. Students achieve well, overall. They contribute productively in lessons, both through discussion and background research they have done, for example, using the Internet to explore the career of Cicero. They develop a sound grasp of life in ancient Rome through understanding of its literature. They question searchingly and comparison with the modern world deepens understanding. In a lesson on the rule of Tiberius, students engaged in lively, high quality debate. An assertion by one - "Of modern politicians, John Major was the one most like Tiberius" - helped all achieve well.
170. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers draw effectively on their expertise and the best lessons are challenging and exciting with a high level of student participation. Most teachers use questioning very well to prompt comparison and sharpen understanding. At times,

however, questions do not probe enough beyond the meaning of the story, which limits learning at an advanced level.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well: standards and results are above average
- Teaching and learning are very good
- The leadership and management of the course are very good
- Not enough computers are available for use in the classroom

Commentary

171. Results overall are above average in both AS and A2 level examinations. Recent results (2004), even though not quite as good as in 2003, reflect very good achievement from the GCSE scores students gained. Analysis of students' work and observation of lessons indicate that the standards achieved on the A2 and AS level courses are above average and are in line to be higher by the time of formal assessments and examinations. Achievement in lessons is good.
172. The students have good knowledge and understanding of the range of topics being studied. They discuss the meaning of inner city deprivation, using their personal knowledge and experience of different locations in London. They show sensitivity and mature understanding of the benefits which result from asylum seekers and refugees in the United Kingdom as well as the problems associated with immigration. In a Year 13 lesson they used their knowledge of news reports within the local environment to good effect, when discussing the hazard of burglary in the city of Oxford.
173. Teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned with logical progression from prior knowledge to develop new concepts with increasing complexity. All teachers show good knowledge of the subject and use personal experience from travel, to add interest and reliability to the topic. Photographs on display in the department, taken by staff during visits to Brazil, add realism to the study of ecosystems and urban structure. A wide range of resources is used effectively to meet the needs of all students. Teachers use websites, reference materials and newspaper reports to guide students in their search for additional information, but not enough computers are available for students' use. Good use is made of past examination papers as an ongoing part of the learning experience.
174. Learning is very good. The ethos for learning is very good, supported by the enthusiasm of the staff and students, which makes learning enjoyable. High motivation results in concentrated effort and the students demonstrate their ability to work independently. Most take pride in the presentation of their work and show maturity in their analysis and evaluation. There is, however, room for improvement in the organisation of the work of a few students
175. Leadership and management are very good. Teaching is shared between three members of staff based on their varied interests and expertise. The combination of substantial experience and relatively recent entry to teaching enables the sharing of ideas and revision of approaches. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Above average standards have been maintained. In response to student needs and staff interest, the coursework module has been replaced by a practical module, which includes cartographic techniques, statistics and geographical enquiry. Ongoing evaluation has resulted in the replacement of the urban module by one on glaciation. Close liaison with parents ensures support for work outside the school day and monitoring of students' work facilitates advice on targets and how to improve

performance. The very good relationship between the staff and the very good hard working, dedicated subject leader contributes to their success in achieving high standards.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well relative to their GCSE grades
- Teaching is consistently very good, with teachers knowing their subject very well and having a good understanding of their students' needs
- Students work well collaboratively and independently but they need additional support for improving their written work
- Research materials available for students are limited in range

Commentary

176. Results in A2 and AS level examinations in most years have been a little above the national average. In 2004, results improved markedly, especially at A2 level in which achievement, relative to students' earlier GCSE scores, was very good. Inspection evidence shows above average standards and very good achievement. Students are developing as very capable historians. They use reference and research techniques effectively to analyse evidence and to interpret it to a high standard. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, as a result of their thorough analysis of issues about nationalism and liberalism in Italy during revolutions in 1820-1 and 1831, students developed very good understanding of the points of view of extremist, radical and moderate groups. Year 13 students are building a very detailed understanding of the principal causes of the Irish famine and the British government's attitude towards it. They also analyse the stereotypes of the Irish as depicted in the Punch magazine of the period. The students are very keen and participate fully in their learning, though some need additional prompting with the improvement and completion of their written tasks, for example, to include reference to evidence they have drawn on and reasons for their views. They have very good research ability, but the resources available do not reflect the range of topics students wish to pursue.
177. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well to support the learning process, balancing group discussions and role plays with appropriate intervention to make clear the complexity and stages of the process and to consolidate and build on previous learning. They have good and friendly relationships with their students whom they know well and plan their lessons to meet their individual needs effectively. They engage them well in discussions, helping them along by building on their interests and experiences particularly in relation to their essays and assignments. They monitor and evaluate students' work well and guide them on how to improve. They also make very good links with their personal (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) development in their teaching.
178. Leadership and management of history are very good and improvement since the last inspection is good. The system of monitoring and evaluating students' work is good, and relevant support is provided. Accommodation is satisfactory but resources are restricted in range and variety.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology is provided at AS and A2 levels and was inspected in detail.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The combination of good and demanding teaching and committed and hard working students enables good standards to be achieved
- Students are enthusiastic, learn effectively and produce good quality portfolios and highly crafted coursework
- Teachers work hard to provide good role models and appropriate work
- The combining of Years 12 and 13 is a poor arrangement and is slowing progress
- Poor quality accommodation and resources restrict the level of work achieved

Commentary

179. It is difficult to determine trends in examination results because numbers are relatively small. In the A2 level examination, taken as a whole over the last three years, results have been above average. Similarly, at AS level, while numbers taking the course have tended to be small, results across the last three years have been above average, overall. Students achieve well, as many move into sixth form study with a good GCSE grade but a weaker foundation in the earlier years than in most schools. A feature of the department is the very good relationships students have with each other and their teachers. This enables them to have a clear picture of what needs to be done, and confidence that their teachers will support them.
180. Teaching and learning are good. All lessons start well. The teachers are experienced and skilful and have prepared suitable guidelines for the coursework. They have very high expectations of the quality of artefact produced and the level of commitment required. Overall, standards seen were above average and achievement good. Students work very hard. They produce practical work of very high quality but some of their design work is naive because of the weaker foundation. Coursework folios show students' interest and maturity and teachers have evaluated their work with them. Research is just satisfactory because the specification of the problem to be solved lacks clarity and this early analysis fails to provide sufficient rigour for the testing and evaluation sections. The school community has raised money for computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) equipment and it is well featured in the course. Unfortunately as it is in an isolated position, away from the main workshops, the manufacturing element has to be done out of school hours.
181. The curricular arrangements this year are poor. Years 12 and 13 are taught together for all lessons. This does not allow the teachers to focus on the needs of students and on the separate examination specifications for AS and A2 levels. This is already affecting progress and standards achieved. For example, Year 13 needed a demonstration and a student had to cover the process practically because it was part of their specification, but it had to be seen by Year 12 as well since it would be unsafe for them to continue practical work unsupervised. Progress then was slowed. Although the group of 14 is efficient, it is not effective.
182. Day-to-day matters are managed satisfactorily, but the vision and leadership of the subject at whole school level have been ineffective because matters raised in two earlier inspection reports have not been tackled. The accommodation: workshop space with appropriate facilities, machines and equipment, is poor. There is no clean space where students can research and draw up designs, and this limits what they can do. Computer resources have improved but are insufficient to meet the specification requirements, because they cannot be easily accessed. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Courses in art and music are provided at AS and A2 levels and both were inspected in detail. Media studies is also provided but was not sampled.

Art

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress overall in the sixth form art courses
- The teaching is focused well on providing support and guidance for individual students
- The use of ICT in support of the presentation of students' work is underdeveloped
- Students' creative and imaginative approaches, to help secure higher grades, are underdeveloped in Year 13

Commentary

183. The school's entry for the A-level examinations is relatively small and results fluctuate. Evaluation shows that students make good progress overall compared with their GCSE grades. In the Year 13 A2 level examinations, overall results in 2002 and 2003 were well below average. However, these improved significantly in 2004 as all four students gained high grades (A or B). In the Year 12 AS level examinations in 2003, results were above the national average for all students and well above for males. This was an improvement on the previous year. In 2004, while all students passed, results were below average for A and B grades.
184. In the work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 12 were well above average and students' achievement was very good. This group attained high GCSE results. Their personal motivation in a lesson where they prepared three-dimensional models, to advertise their work, was excellent. They achieved very well because the exercise gave them deeper insights into their chosen projects, and how others might perceive them. In contrast, standards in Year 13 were average and students' achievement satisfactory. Overall, this is an average attaining group based on their GCSE results. In spite of good teaching strategies, most students in the group are dependent upon their teacher for creative ideas. This is linked to the underdevelopment of creative and imaginative approaches in earlier years, which was an issue for improvement at the previous inspection. Nevertheless, the current syllabus is designed to engage candidates in the creative process by exploring a range of ideas, skills and materials to develop their own visual explorations. Students in Year 12 are achieving greater success in this than students in Year 13.
185. Teaching is good in Years 12 and 13 because it is understanding and supportive of individual students' needs. The teachers know the students well and give good guidance to enable them to improve. Because of this, working relationships are good and retention rates are high, since students are motivated well to stay on and finish the courses. Learning is good overall in the sixth form because the levels of challenge offered to the students are realistic, and give them good confidence to succeed.
186. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Good consideration has been given to the choice of courses to enable students to succeed. Teachers lead by example, based on their good subject knowledge and understanding. Sixth form art teachers work together effectively as a team. ICT resources are improving and are being used well to support students' research but, as yet, there is little evidence of the application of ICT in students' practical work. Standards and students' progress are better than at the time of the previous inspection, therefore improvement is good.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average
- Students are enthusiastic and committed to their work
- A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities enriches and extends learning
- Lesson planning and the monitoring of students' progress lack rigour

Commentary

187. The results achieved at AS and A2 levels have been consistently well above average over a period of time. Students achieve high standards in instrumental performance. The number taking the subject remains disappointingly low and there are currently no students studying at AS level at the school. Provision has been made for students to study music technology at a neighbouring school.
188. Standards of work seen in the A2 level course, including harmony exercises and preparation for listening tests, reflect the well above average examination results. Achievement is good. Students are enthusiastic and are committed to their work. They have developed sufficient confidence to discuss their work and their discussions reflect a mature approach to independent learning, which is good preparation for the next stage of education. Their commitment to instrumental achievement is a major factor in their overall success.
189. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject and engage students in high quality discussions which facilitate good learning. The very small class sizes lead to the development of very good relationships and detailed knowledge of students' understanding. Whilst students have a good range of reference books to work from, the overall lesson planning lacks detail. Students need more guidance to help them plan their own work and to prepare their revision schedules.
190. The leadership of the department is very good but its management is unsatisfactory. Teachers have high aspirations and are dedicated in their desire to achieve high musical outcomes in terms of performance and commitment. Extra-curricular activities are extensive and the high standards achieved make a significant contribution to the standards achieved in music. Sixth form students are given the opportunity to take increasing responsibility in this area. However, as in the main school, the very heavy commitment of teachers' time limits their capacity to evaluate and plan developments and increase the number of students opting to study music at an advanced level.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

AS and A2 level courses are provided in physical education and the BTEC National Diploma course in sports science. These were inspected in detail.

Physical education and sports science

Provision in physical education and sports science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent leadership and management create an environment in which students excel and achieve very well
- A wide range of accredited courses, extra-curricular sport and a programme of recreational activities foster interest and high levels of performance
- The use of ICT enhances learning and is used effectively for the analysis of team and individual performance

Commentary

191. AS and A2 level results are above the national average in most years. Results in the BTEC National Diploma award for sports science show a good level of distinctions and merits. Results in 2004 represented very good achievement relative to students' GCSE scores.
192. Standards currently reached in AS level and BTEC courses are well above expectations and above average at A2 level. Students achieve very well relative to their abilities. The students currently following the AS level course have a very good depth of knowledge, particularly in anatomy and psychology. They are able to use this knowledge to help improve practical performance and their writing shows a confident use of technical vocabulary. They are particularly knowledgeable about training programmes and make good use of the new weights room. Those following the A2 level course, whilst not as academically strong, have a good grasp of work on all modules and thrive best in lessons where expectations are high and tasks are challenging. In practical lessons they show very good ball handling skills and are able to adapt strategies and tactics to a variety of games. Students effectively use heart rate monitors linked to exercise bikes and have the opportunity to visit local universities to use physiology laboratories. They use number effectively to record and compare performance. They are not so confident to talk about how the course influences their own personal experiences in sport. Students following the BTEC course have a well above average knowledge of all modules. They use research effectively both in and out of lessons to further their understanding. They understand how to evaluate their own teaching and organisational skills in preparation for working with younger pupils.
193. Teaching and learning are very good, with excellent features. In the very best lessons the students are challenged and motivated by pace, high expectations and an understanding that only the highest levels of effort will suffice. In many lessons teachers plan an element of practical work that effectively reinforces theoretical aspects. Homework assignments are well linked to lessons and require high levels of independent research. In lessons the teachers give positive but challenging feedback for homework assignments. Marking varies between teachers but is mostly constructive and sets useful targets. Each course is well structured with helpful guidance for students that prepares them for each stage. The teachers know the students extremely well and there is a notable mutual respect.
194. An outstanding feature of sixth form students is their high motivation. This is apparent in the way they talk about their subject and their passion for sport. They spend much time analysing digital imagery of their performances in rugby. The department has just acquired sophisticated software that allows detailed performance analysis. The students are appreciative of the support and time given by a dedicated team of teachers. The additional enrichment programme that is open also to Year 11 enables them to follow their interests in sports such as badminton, tennis, golf, scuba diving and fitness. They use a range of facilities both on and off the school site. Students regularly help at a local special school. This is of mutual benefit to all involved and makes a positive impact on their personal development. Team sports reach the highest levels. Many students participate at county levels in rugby, cricket, swimming and athletics and some achieve distinction at national level.
195. Leadership and management are excellent. Every avenue is explored to provide the students with the widest range of opportunities. Provision draws students from other schools who want to excel in sport and achieve well academically. The programme is well supported by other teachers, many of whom are particularly skilled and qualified in a range of sports. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The sports college status has increased the range of opportunities on offer and has accelerated the school towards a centre of excellence. This has all been particularly well managed by the director of sport and his team.

BUSINESS

Courses at AS and A2 levels are provided in business studies and economics and both were inspected in detail.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good
- A wide range of different learning strategies develops very good independent learning skills
- Very good teaching provides an effective and supportive learning environment
- Group work is very effective because of the very good relationships in the classes
- The links with industry and commerce are extensive and strong
- Retention is very good.

Commentary

196. AS and A2 level results in 2003 were well above the national averages. In recent years up to 2003 students have consistently exceeded their target grades by the best part of a whole grade. In 2004, results at A2 level were even better. Retention is very good, with almost all students completing the A2 course. A high percentage continue studying business related courses at university. Students of all backgrounds achieve highly.
197. In work seen, standards in both Years 12 and 13 were above average. In a Year 12 class, most students showed good understanding of break-even, though a few found the calculation difficult; they were well supported by effective teaching and achieved very well, overall. Year 13 students showed very good reasoning skills in role-play examining stance in industrial relations. Considerable development in understanding was observed from Year 12 to Year 13. Students' written work is well organised. The most able develop very good analytic and evaluative skills. Year 13 students are in line to achieve very well by the end of the year.
198. Teaching is very good and this underpins the highly effective learning. Lessons are very well planned with a very extensive range of sources, including ICT, and materials used to develop understanding and skills. Students are actively encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and the majority respond very well and become confident independent learners. Students are very positive about business and the support that they receive. Very effective collaborative work in Year 13 is supported by very strong relationships. Students respect each other, listen carefully to other opinions and share ideas well. A very effective Young Enterprise group in Year 12 is strongly supported by a large number of parents with their own businesses. Students visit a good range of financial and commercial institutions as well as several business conferences to deepen their understanding of the subject.
199. Leadership and management are very good. The department has been very effective for a number of years. The teaching team is very secure in its knowledge and is able to very effectively enthuse and motivate the students. The students spoke very enthusiastically about the wide range of methods and resources used and they thoroughly enjoy the subject. Very high academic standards are regularly delivered and the performance of business education is very strong. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Economics

Provision in economics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good
- Excellent teaching is the key strength: expectations are very high and the pace of lessons is very fast
- Very strong independent learning skills are developed through use of a very wide range of resources and strategies
- Excellent relationships underpin the very rapid progress that students make in Year 12
- Retention is very good in both courses; a very high percentage continue the study of economics at university

Commentary

200. Results at AS and A2 levels have generally exceeded, and sometimes well exceeded, those nationally. Over recent years achievement has been very good among students of all backgrounds. In 2003, results matched those nationally and achievement was good. In 2004 the proportion of the highest grades (A, B) at A2 level increased significantly.
201. In work seen, standards in Year 12 were well above average. Students make rapid progress in understanding as a result of excellent teaching. They continue to make very good progress in Year 13 and achievement overall is very good. In Year 12 students acquire a wide range of skills. They very confidently handle and interpret numerical data, draw accurate conclusions from a range of evidence and give highly articulate and thoughtful responses to searching questions. Year 13 students work very hard and with considerable focus.
202. Teaching is excellent, underpins the highly effective learning observed and is the key factor of students' success. Lessons are very well planned, with a very extensive range of sources and materials, including ICT, used to develop understanding and skills. Use of the interactive white board is particularly effective. Questioning is very highly developed and students are constantly challenged to extend their answers. The pace of lessons is very fast and the large majority of students respond very well to the challenge and very high expectations. A very small number in Year 13 have to be encouraged to contribute: they are too reliant on the teacher for their very good progress. However, the majority work with an intensity not often seen and their attitude is exemplary. Students are actively encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and they are confident independent learners. Very good examples of students' marking each other's work and the sharing of ideas were observed. Students are very enthusiastic about economics and the very high quality of teaching. Collaborative work in Year 13 is very effective, supported by very good relationships.
203. Leadership and management are very good: the subject has enabled students to achieve very well over a number of years. The teacher in charge is an excellent role model for others in the way he motivates students and ensures that their depth of knowledge and understanding is very strong. The resources are very varied and the detailed work booklets provide an excellent base for learning. A very comprehensive economics website has been developed which is used not only by local students but by many other schools as well. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		2
Pupils' achievement	3	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)		2
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	1	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	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	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	3	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	3	4
The leadership of the headteacher		2

The leadership of other key staff	2	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).