

INSPECTION REPORT

RAINE'S FOUNDATION SCHOOL

London

LEA area: Tower Hamlets

Unique reference number: 100979

Headteacher: Paul Hollingum

Lead inspector: Kevin Haddock

Dates of inspection: 15th - 18th November 2004

Inspection number: 268887

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 aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	905
School address:	Approach Road Bethnal Green London
Postcode	E2 9LY
Telephone number:	(020) 8981 1231
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mark Taylor
Date of previous inspection:	1 st February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Raine's Foundation Secondary School is an 11 - 18 mixed, comprehensive school of about average size. The number on roll is 905, of which 159 are in the sixth form. The school is based on two sites, more than half a mile apart in Bethnal Green, Central London. The school has a long established tradition of service going back to 1719, the year of its foundation. Great importance is attached to promoting a Christian ethos, which welcomes many traditions within the Church of England. The socio-economic circumstances of students reflect a whole range of family circumstances, but overall are below average. The school is popular and heavily oversubscribed. Students are drawn from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Approximately half have white British heritage, with another quarter black British Caribbean or African, and the remainder from a range of different backgrounds. The number of students whose first language is not English is high, but the number at an early stage of language acquisition is very low. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs is below the national average; the percentage with statements of special educational needs is average. Standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are average and similarly in the case of the sixth form which has an open access policy. The sixth form provides a wide range of curriculum choices considering its size.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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33193	Vera Bergersen	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
4590	Val Cumberbirch	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
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21659	Carol Lukins	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs
32284	Christine Mayle	Team inspector	Mathematics
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Raine's Foundation is a good school with a good sixth form. Boys and girls from all ethnic groups achieve well whatever their level of attainment, including those who are gifted and talented and those with special educational needs. The achievement of students with English as an additional language is very good. The school provides a good quality education overall, has an excellent ethos and is very inclusive. It gives good value for money. Overall, teaching and learning are good throughout the school and are sometimes very good or excellent. Leadership by the headteacher is excellent.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The way the school's aim to provide a "positive and disciplined learning environment" is fully realised.
- Good achievement by students due to good teaching in most subjects, although achievement is unsatisfactory in music in Years 7 to 11 and in information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 7 to 9.
- Very good specialist expertise of teachers in the subjects they teach and the way they encourage students to do their best.
- Teachers do not make the most effective use of prior attainment data to set targets for students.
- Curricular opportunities offered to students are very good.
- The excellent provision for the social and moral development of students which leads to very good attitudes and behaviour and contributes to excellent relationships in a culturally diverse community.
- Clear vision and sense of direction provided by the headteacher and his senior colleagues.
- Unsatisfactory resources and accommodation which have a detrimental effect on standards in a number of subjects.
- Students and parents have a high regard for the school, but feel that it should take more account of their views.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Results have improved in line with national trends, and at the end of Year 9 they now match national levels in English, mathematics and science. Teaching is better than it was, and is very good or excellent in a much higher proportion of lessons. Spiritual and cultural development are now good. The school has been very successful in addressing many of the key issues identified in the 1998 Ofsted report, although standards in ICT remain unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Governors continue to be very supportive, but still need to monitor and evaluate the quality of education in the school more actively.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	-	B	C	D

Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	-	B	D	
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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.

The 2003 results were the last set of results that had been officially validated at the time when the inspection took place. Results for 2004 are better than those in 2003, however. Analysis, supported by information provided by the LEA, shows that provisionally the school's results were above the national average at GCSE and in line with national expectations in the sixth form.

Overall, the achievement of students is good. In Years 7 to 9 they make good progress and achieve well in English, mathematics and science. Test results in these subjects have improved in line with the national trend. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is also good in all other subjects except in art and design and technology where it is very good, geography where it is satisfactory and music and ICT where it is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is again good in most subjects; it is very good in history, satisfactory in business, design and technology and ICT, and unsatisfactory in music. Sixth form students achieve well in the majority of subjects, and very well in mathematics, history and psychology.

The school is very effective in building students' confidence and self-esteem and in stimulating a desire to learn. Attendance is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Punctuality is good to school and to lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good in the main school and in the sixth form. Examples of excellence were seen throughout the school. Significant efforts have been made to develop the curriculum to match the changing needs of students and to provide work related learning opportunities. Good provision is made to enrich learning outside lessons. Support and guidance for students is good and teachers fulfil their pastoral roles very well. Partnership with parents is good and there are good community links.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is very good and management is good. The headteacher's leadership is excellent. He took over shortly before the previous inspection and since then has led the school with highly commendable vision and energy. In partnership with his senior colleagues he has established a climate at the school that motivates staff and makes them feel valued. Members of staff communicate shared values and provide excellent role models for students. Governors help to shape the vision and direction of the school, but need to develop their role further. The school has evolved some useful strategies to evaluate its work, although there is still a need to engage all middle managers in this effectively. The budget is managed well, with securing high quality teachers the key priority.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the school. They like particularly the good progress made by their children, the good teaching and the fact that teachers expect students to work hard. Students of all ages enjoy being at the school. They have a high regard for their teachers. They have some concerns about the misbehaviour of a minority, but consider

that, on the whole, the school handles this well. Both parents and students would like the school to seek and respond to their views more regularly and inspectors agree that more systematic arrangements for consultation are needed.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve standards in music in Years 7 to 11 and in ICT in Years 7 to 9.
- Make more effective use of prior attainment data to set targets for students.
- Take action to address the shortcomings in resources and accommodation which have a detrimental effect on standards in a number of subjects.
- Provide more opportunities to consult with students and parents.

THE SIXTH FORM AT RAINE'S FOUNDATION SECONDARY SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. It has made good progress since the last inspection and provides good value for money. The school has an open access policy to students joining the sixth form from other schools provided they meet the minimum entry requirements. As a result, increasing numbers of students choose the school for their sixth form studies.

Standards are rising and students achieve well with many continuing into higher education or worthwhile employment.

The curriculum offers a very good range of AS and A-level courses for a sixth form of its size and has introduced some vocationally focused GCSEs in Year 12. It offers a good extra-curricular and enrichment programme. Sixth formers are keen to take on extra responsibilities. They are trusted by the adults and respected by the younger students. Through the opportunities provided to them, sixth formers become self-assured, mature and sensible young people. They recognise that the school helps them to become more independent learners and they rightly value the quality of teaching they receive. They are proud of the school and leave to enter the adult world with confidence and maturity.

The main strengths and weaknesses:

- Sixth form students are excellent ambassadors and role models for younger students.
- The care, guidance and support students receive is very good.
- Teaching and learning and assessment in the sixth form are good.
- Standards in the vocational courses are not high enough.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	EVALUATION
English, languages and communication	Provision in English is good which helps students to achieve well. Teachers have a depth of subject knowledge which supports good learning. Provision in Spanish is good . Expert teaching leads to good achievement and greater confidence among the students.
Mathematics	Provision is very good . Standards are well above average and are the result of very good teaching and learning.
Science	Provision in physics is good . Committed and enthusiastic teaching helps to motivate students.
Information and communication technology	Provision is good . Good teaching supports good learning and achievement, particularly among the higher attaining students.
Humanities	Provision in geography is satisfactory . Good teaching helps students to meet the standards expected nationally. Provision in history is very good . Very good teaching leads to well above average standards and very good achievement. Provision in sociology is very good . Standards are improving in what is often a new subject for students because of very good teaching. Provision in psychology is very good . Very good teaching helps students to achieve very well in a subject that is new for many.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art and design is satisfactory . Students are making a sound start in what is the first group to embark on an A-level course in recent years. Provision in media studies is good ; students' practical work is of a high standard.
Business	Provision in business studies is good with students achieving good standards. Provision in economics is good with good teaching that motivates students to achieve well.

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 very good. Students are inducted into the sixth form very well. There is helpful guidance which enables them to make appropriate choices about the courses they study. Students new to the school settle in quickly. Staff guide students in improving their work in the subjects they study and in applying for university or jobs. Students are encouraged to take on greater responsibilities, for example, as prefects or in helping younger students as part of the community service all sixth formers undertake. They work closely with the senior staff to increase their contribution within the school as a whole.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership of the sixth form is very good. Strategic direction and a clear sense of purpose come from the headteacher, senior leadership team and the head of sixth form. The sixth form team is developing well and day-to-day management and administration is good. Pastoral support and academic guidance are very good and effective strategies have been introduced since the last inspection to improve attendance. The school has developed innovative approaches to providing courses in minority subjects through distance learning. For the most part, individual subjects in the sixth form are lead and managed well.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Sixth formers enjoy being at Raine's and find the teaching challenging and demanding. A significant strength of the school is the accessibility of teachers and the helpful guidance they provide. Students appreciate that they are helped to study independently. Whilst some felt that there was not a good range of enrichment activities, inspectors did not agree. Some students considered that the range of courses did not match their career plans, but the range of AS and A-level courses is very good for a sixth form of this size. Inspectors support the view that sixth formers' opinions should be sought more regularly, however.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Overall, standards are above average in Year 9 and in Year 11. When students enter the school in Year 7 their standards are average compared to others of the same age. During their time at the school they make good progress and achieve well. Standards are in line with what is expected in the sixth form and better than at the time of the last inspection. Results in national tests and examinations have improved in line with the national trend. A significant improvement was seen in 2004, especially in the GCSE examination results.

At the time of the inspection, test and examination results for 2004 were still regarded as provisional, but have been confirmed by the local education authority.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Boys and girls from all ethnic groups achieve well.
- Gifted students achieve very well and those with special educational needs do well.
- Standards in ICT in Years 7 to 9 and in music in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory.
- Competence in the use of ICT across the curriculum has improved, but is still below what is expected.
- Achievement in vocational GCSEs is not high enough.

Commentary

1. Students join the school in Year 7 with average standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science. The ethnic background of the students is diverse but the number who speak a language other than English at home is low. The number of students with special educational needs is below the national average.
2. The test results of students at the age of 14 are in line with what is expected nationally and over the last five years have improved in line with the national trend. The 2003 results in English, mathematics and science showed the school to be in line with national levels overall and doing very well against schools in similar socio-economic circumstances with higher attaining students doing particularly well in mathematics and science.
3. More recent results in 2004 indicate that there has been considerable improvement in standards in English with 84 per cent achieving the expected level or higher. Results in mathematics and science were in line with the national average. Taking account of value-added indicators, which calculate how they are doing compared with the levels they have reached earlier, students did well overall in Years 7 to 9. Boys and girls from all ethnic groups did well. The school met its targets.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.9 (31.8)	33.4 (33.3)

mathematics	36.0 (34.7)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.9 (32.3)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 145 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Standards at the end of Year 11 are improving. In 2003 students' results were close to the national average and had improved on the 2002 results. They were high in comparison with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances. There was a fall in the percentage attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE to 44 per cent, but the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to G grades and at least one A* to G grade was above the national average.
- In 2004 provisional figures indicate a substantial improvement in the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades to 57 per cent which is above the national average and good taking value-added into account. Targets were met. In 2004 the number of boys in Year 11 was almost twice the number of girls. Boys did well, but girls performed even better. Gifted and talented students achieved very good results in line with expectations. In 2004, students performed well at GCSE in history, science and Spanish and less well in art, food technology, design and technology (resistant materials) and music.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	44 (48)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (93)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	41.4 (41.5)	40.6 (39.8)

There were 144 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- The standards of work seen currently in Year 9 are above average in many subjects. Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9 because of effective teaching and very positive attitudes to their learning. Standards are above average in English and mathematics and in line with expectations in science. Standards in art and design and technology are well above average; they are above average in history and citizenship. In other subjects, standards are in line with what is expected with the exception of ICT where standards are below expectations. This is because key parts of the National Curriculum for this subject are not covered and there are shortcomings in the teaching. Although standards in music are in line with expectations students make unsatisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 taking into account their attainment on entry to the school.
- In Years 10 and 11 standards are above average overall and students achieve well. Standards are above average in English, mathematics, science, citizenship, geography, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. Standards are well above average in art. They are average in business studies, design and technology and ICT, but below average in music.

8. Students achieve well in all year groups. This is mainly due to their very positive attitudes and to the good teaching they receive especially in English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages, art and physical education. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls. Gifted students achieve very well and those with special educational needs do well. The achievement of the few students with English as an additional language is very good.
9. The school makes satisfactory provision for the development of students' literacy skills. Standards are average in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11. Teachers across the curriculum seek to develop standards of literacy in a variety of ways. Standards in numeracy across the curriculum are good and students use and apply their competency in mathematics in a variety of subjects. Competence in ICT is satisfactory for the most part and has improved since the last inspection.

Sixth form

10. Standards in the sixth form are improving. In 2003 there were 45 students who were entered for GCE A2 examinations with 72 per cent of them gaining A to E grades. In 2004 this figure increased to 91 per cent. Highest results were in mathematics where 75 per cent of the students entered attained grades A and B. Standards were above expectations in art and design, electronics, economics, drama, media studies and physics.
11. The school has an open access policy to students joining the sixth form from other schools provided they meet the minimum entry requirements. As a result increasing numbers of students choose to come to the school in Year 12. Some students enter the sixth form with lower than average GCSE grades and when this is taken into account students of all attainments achieve well at GCE A-level. Boys achieve better than girls, which contrasts with the national picture. Girls achieve well in light of their previous levels of attainment. The school is correctly seeking ways to increase the number of higher level grades.
12. In 2003, one year vocational courses leading to the double award GCSE were introduced to meet the needs of students who have not achieved sufficient grades at the end of Year 11 to be eligible for a full GCE A-level programme. The numbers taking this programme are relatively small. Results for the first examinations in 2004 were below average.
13. Sixth form students currently in Years 12 and 13 achieve well in the majority of subjects, and very well in mathematics, history and psychology. This is due to well-planned lessons and engaging teaching methods. Students are given helpful guidance based on careful assessment of their progress so that they know how to improve their work.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	72.4 (94.1)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	16.0 (37.8)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	126.6 (183.8)	234.2 (232.9)

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and have a significant impact on the quality of their work throughout the school. There are good levels of attendance and students are punctual to lessons. Very good provision is made for the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, which enables them to become mature and responsible citizens.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of students' relationships with one another and with adults is excellent.
- Students are enthusiastic about what the school offers them and like coming to school.
- Attendance is above average and students are prompt to lessons.
- The school is a well-ordered and friendly community in which everyone is respected.
- Moral and social development are excellent.
- Spiritual and cultural development are good.

Commentary

14. Students have very good attitudes in lessons and work industriously and confidently. They are proud of the school and are keen to learn. They are particularly good at joining in class discussions and debate and supporting each other. Students want to do well and place high expectations upon themselves. No unsatisfactory attitudes were seen during the inspection.
15. Very good behaviour is the norm in lessons, assemblies and in open areas. The quality of behaviour in the upper school is particularly good considering the cramped accommodation and narrow corridors. Students are friendly, polite and courteous, and most speak very confidently and informatively to adults, both in and out of lessons. Students report that when rare instances of bullying occur they are resolved quickly and effectively. Students feel very safe in the school.
16. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Students relate positively to their peers, teachers and the headteacher. They treat others with respect and are very willing to help each other in a variety of ways. The school is very effective in promoting a Christian ethos consistent with its traditions. The level of integration of students from different cultures is outstanding. This stems from a cohesion and a common sense of purpose within the school that unites everyone. Older students are mature and responsible. They offer support and guidance to younger students through a buddy system.
17. Excellent provision for moral and social education makes a significant contribution to students' increasing maturity. In personal, social and health education and in subjects such as English, history and citizenship there are opportunities to discuss significant issues in depth, and to prepare students to accept responsibilities and to play their roles in the school community. The School Council fulfils its role as a representative forum.

18. Good provision is made for students' spiritual and cultural education. The school fulfils its statutory duty of holding a daily act of collective worship. An excellent programme of assemblies gives students opportunities to reflect on moral and spiritual issues promoted by a wide range of visiting speakers; these are often supported by imaginative use of music, drama and dance. Many subjects provide good opportunities to develop pupils' cultural awareness. In English very good use is made of world poetry to provide a forum for the discussion of differing cultural perspectives.

Sixth form

- 19. Students in the sixth form are proud of their role as senior members of the school community, taking on and rising to their responsibilities. They support the younger students in the school in a variety of ways both as prefects and through community service. All sixth formers undertake 20 hours a year as part of the active citizenship programme by taking responsibility for an aspect of school life. Examples include running the junior choir, helping the school site team, hearing readers in the lower school, promoting charitable work or working out of the school within their own local community.
- 20. The role of prefect is highly sought after. Students apply for this and take their responsibilities seriously. They work in partnership with a senior member of the sixth form staff to promote a positive ethos in the school.
- 21. The relationships among students in the sixth form are excellent. Those who join the sixth form from other schools feel very welcome and all students co-operate well together regardless of ethnic, gender or year group. They look after the sixth form common room and study area well.
- 22. Sixth formers are trusted by the staff and respected by the younger students. They recognise that the school helps them to become more independent learners and they rightly value the quality of teaching they receive. They are proud of the school and leave to enter the adult world with confidence and maturity.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.6	School data	1.7
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.

23. Attendance is above the national average and the school has good systems to help achieve regular attendance. Parents are well aware of the procedures and work well in partnership with the school. Attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory and systems for supporting and monitoring good attendance have improved since the previous inspection.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

CATEGORIES USED IN THE ANNUAL SCHOOL CENSUS	NUMBER OF PUPILS ON ROLL	NUMBER OF FIXED PERIOD EXCLUSIONS	NUMBER OF PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS
White – British	375	51	1
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	47	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	32	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	15	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	17	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	8	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	114	27	1
Black or Black British – African	110	26	1
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	12	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	170	0	0

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

24. The incidence of exclusions is higher than is usual in the local education authority as a whole, but the principles by which the school operates its policy are valid. Procedures are managed fairly and consistently.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided is good. Teaching is good and supports good achievement and good learning. The curriculum is very good and there are good arrangements for care, guidance and support. Links with parents and the community are also good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. Examples of excellent teaching were seen throughout the school in all years. Assessment is satisfactory overall, but teachers do not make the most effective use of prior attainment data to set targets for students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good specialist expertise of teachers in the subjects they teach which leads to improving results in tests and examinations.
- Teachers encourage students, value them as individuals and respond positively to their efforts. Promotion of equal opportunities is very good.
- The teaching of modern foreign languages is more effective than at the time of the last inspection.
- The provision of teaching assistants is good in some subjects, but insufficient in others.
- Students work very productively in a very orderly learning environment.

- Marking is regular and students receive feedback on the quality of their work, but clearer guidance on what they need to do to improve is needed, particularly in Years 7 to 11.

Commentary

25. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now much more consistent in quality. This is the result of the school's success in securing the services of good teachers coupled with the implementation of a developing programme of monitoring and evaluation which has addressed particular aspects of teaching over the last three or four years. Attention has been drawn to key areas of effective practice, for example the clear exposition of aims at the start of lessons and the inclusion of a proper summary at the end, and these have been adopted widely throughout the school. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been used very effectively in this connection. The positive impact of this strategy can be seen in Year 10, for example, where the quality of teaching is now much more consistent than it was at the time of the last inspection.
26. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good overall though not quite so effective as in later years. It is very good in art and good in all other subjects with the exception of geography where it is satisfactory and music and ICT where it is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is again good in most subjects. The teaching in history and art is very good in these two years. In business, design and technology and ICT it is satisfactory and unsatisfactory in music.
27. During this inspection 145 lessons were observed and of these one third were good and another third were very good or excellent. This compares favourably with the outcomes of the last inspection when 20 per cent of the lessons were either very good or excellent. Of the eight unsatisfactory lessons seen, all except one were in music or ICT. In music the aims of lessons were unclear and poorly explained, whereas in ICT the pace of students' learning was too slow with insufficient challenge for higher attaining students.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 145 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
14 (10%)	35 (24 %)	47 (32%)	41 (28%)	8 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

28. When teaching is excellent or very good lessons are planned carefully and students are challenged by the tasks set. Teachers adopt very good questioning techniques so that students seek answers more deeply and extend their thinking. This is commonly found in those subjects where the teaching is most effective such as mathematics and history. The use of effective teaching methods, including problem solving tasks and games that help to inspire and motivate students, are commonly seen in the best lessons. In Spanish, for example, the use of language games helps to reinforce learning of vocabulary and grammatical structures and in art an ambitious project linking art and music results in very good learning. In mathematics in Years 7 to 9 enrichment activities are made available for gifted students. In English a rich variety

of learning activities is used so that students can learn in the way that suits them best.

29. The way teachers promote excellent relationships coupled with their insistence on high standards of behaviour help to create a climate in lessons that supports very good or excellent learning. In mathematics, for example, students work well together and respect each other's efforts; they and their teachers can take risks without fear of ridicule if they get it wrong. In physical education excellent relationships among teachers and students result in an environment where everyone wants to do well.
30. The most positive feature of students' learning is their willingness to work hard. Students are eager to get on and show what they can do. In science, for example, they took pride in showing their work to the inspector and were able to discuss it with confidence. Students demonstrate a good capacity to work independently and show initiative when they are given the opportunity. The school's decision to identify ways of involving students more fully in their learning as one of this year's key priorities to further improve the quality of teaching seems very appropriate in the circumstances.
31. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in developing the use of ICT across a range of subjects. In some subjects such as mathematics computers are now being used to extend students' learning and further work is planned for the future. In other subjects much remains to be done, but the school is providing greater access to ICT resources.
32. Homework is satisfactory and makes a sound contribution to students' progress. Both they and their parents agree that homework is, for the most part, appropriate and set regularly.
33. Students with special educational needs are taught well and make good progress. They have positive attitudes to learning. In the majority of lessons teachers are sensitive to their individual needs and provide good encouragement and support. In mathematics and science, for example, teachers provide appropriately chosen resources that help students to learn. Teachers provide good support in the Learning Support Unit and when teaching assistants are available to help students in mainstream classrooms this is also effective. In some cases, however, they are not available to help students with special educational needs which results in more limited progress.
34. Assessment is satisfactory overall. It now contributes to curriculum planning more effectively than at the time of the last inspection. There are tests at appropriate times and, for the most part, work is marked regularly and conscientiously. Most students agree that their work is assessed helpfully and clearly welcome the feedback and encouragement they receive. Teachers acknowledge when students have tried hard, although they do not always make clear what they should then do to improve.
35. Teachers keep accurate records of students' progress which they use to inform their planning of lessons. There is an apparent lack of awareness among teachers of data relating to students' prior attainment, however, with the result that target-setting is only in the early stages of development. Information about the standards achieved by students before they enter the school is not widely used with the result that teachers

and students appear to be unsure of how well students are doing relative to their potential. This affects Years 7 and 8 in the lower school particularly.

Sixth form

36. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Approximately half the lessons observed were judged to be very good or excellent and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The effective teaching students receive supports good learning and leads to improved standards. There has been good progress since the last inspection.
37. Many of the strong features of the teaching in the main school are found again in the sixth form. Some aspects are even more positive, however. Expectations are high in sixth form lessons and work is usually very challenging. Teachers use a greater variety of approaches and most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace with a very good use of time. Students find the work demanding. They are encouraged to become independent learners and to develop their studies further out of lessons. Teachers have very good awareness of exam requirements and give students helpful guidance on how to improve.
38. Teaching and learning in the one-year vocational courses are satisfactory, but tend to lack sparkle. Partly this is the result of small group sizes which make it difficult to achieve stimulating interactions in the classroom. There is also a lack of up to date resources to support the work in these courses.
39. In general, however, the school is keen to promote a wider range of learning opportunities for sixth formers including the use of distance learning packages. There is increasing use of ICT in a range of subjects.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good. It ensures that students are well prepared for later stages of their education and provides a good choice of general and specialist courses in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. It is regularly reviewed and updated to take account of new developments and to improve its relevance for students. In Years 10 and 11 well developed partnerships with colleges and training providers ensure students' needs are met. Equality of access is good, including provision for students with special educational needs.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and relevant to the needs of students.
- Staff are well qualified and very effective in meeting curriculum needs.
- The preparation for adult life programme (PAL) is good. Work experience needs to be integrated into the curriculum, however.
- The rationale for developing the vocational curriculum is well founded and based on extensive knowledge of the available qualifications.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- The Key Stage 3 Strategy is managed ably and a number of subjects have benefited from the training and advice of consultants.
- Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory in a number of subjects.

Commentary

40. All National Curriculum subjects are taught in Years 7 to 9 and all statutory requirements are met. Provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection although achievement is not yet satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The school offers a good range of courses in Years 10 and 11 including some vocational options with further provision in related courses to be offered in the sixth form from 2005, thus ensuring progression and providing very good programmes for students aged 14-19. GCSE short courses are available in citizenship studies and religious studies. GCSEs in ICT and PE are also available. Students are not able to take two languages, however. Timetabling constraints also mean that some students have mathematics twice in one day, for example in Year 10. The school's split site is a further constraint.
41. A very small number of students study for NVQ qualifications in hairdressing, motor vehicle maintenance and other related courses at the local college. There is also a 'workforce academy' placement available for disaffected students although no students currently take this. The school has very good partnerships with local City businesses such as Deloitte and Bloomburys. These, and other companies, provide about 80 business mentors to work with students.
42. There are good opportunities for curriculum enrichment. These include clubs for economics, basketball, chess, dancing and sixth form debating. There is a school newspaper and Christian groups. These activities improve student achievement and personal development. Participation in sporting activities is very good; it is good in those related to the arts.
43. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory in a number of subject areas. For example, science in the upper school uses old and battered equipment; there is some cramped accommodation in history and the use of two mobile classrooms constrains the use of ICT; in a Year 11 music lesson there were insufficient computers available. Resources do not always support learning, for example in business studies and economics up-to-date journals and magazines were not available. The high quality up-to-date resources that are especially important in vocational courses are not always available.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has been innovative in its post-16 curriculum development including the use of web based courses and distance learning to broaden provision.

Commentary

44. The sixth form curriculum is innovative and imaginative using distance learning and web based courses to expand the range of provision to include law, accounting and critical thinking. There is a good range of higher provision. Free-standing mathematics units are also available to support continuing mathematical skill development for students who do not wish to take a full AS or A-level course. Active citizenship is very well developed in the sixth form.

Work-related learning

Provision in work-related learning is **satisfactory**.

Commentary

45. Work-related learning is implemented for all students through the PAL programme. Links with local businesses through the business partnership help to ensure vocational relevance and a number of realistic work-related activities are provided. These include the Construction challenge for Year 9 students which involves 40 of them working with an architect on a local construction site to design and build a house. Preparation for the world of work is also provided through student conferences such as the 'Getting Ahead' conference for all students in Year 10. This event provides support in writing CVs, interview techniques and making successful job applications. Work experience for students is not yet fully integrated into the curriculum or learning. It is only available after the GCSE examinations and placements have to be set up by students themselves. Take up by students is very low.

Care, guidance and support

Standards of care and welfare throughout the school are very good. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is good. The views of students are valued, but are not sought and responded to systemically.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good induction arrangements for students joining the school.
- Very good guidance on further study and career opportunities.
- Care and welfare procedures are efficiently organised.
- Tutors give good support to individuals.

Commentary

46. All staff work together to ensure the well-being of the students throughout the school. Policies and procedures for child protection, health and safety, the administration of medicines and first aid are very clearly laid out, well known to staff and are implemented effectively. As a result, standards of care are very high. Well-kept records of accidents are maintained and are carefully monitored by senior staff and appropriate action taken if they relate to safety issues. An annual health and safety check of the school buildings and site is carried out by an outside firm of contractors followed by a report to the governors. A risk assessment takes place for every outside visit and takes account of the medical needs of individuals. All bullying incidents are recorded in the bullying record book which is monitored by the headteacher who reviews the bullying policy annually. Very good induction procedures enable Year 7 students to settle quickly, with Year 11 students helping in this process. Similar arrangements help the transition of Year 8 pupils to the upper school site.
47. Good tutoring and mentoring arrangements are in place and enable students to progress well with their personal development and learning. However, whilst students are involved in target setting insufficient use is made of performance data. Students with special educational needs are well supported. The carefully constructed and comprehensive programme of impartial advice on further study and career

opportunities is very good. From the start of their time at school, students are encouraged to consider the options that are open to them. Students are well supported by the Connexions personal advisors in this programme.

48. Subject teachers and form teachers are always ready to listen to students' or parents' concerns and to respond to them. The homework planner is used by parents to communicate with the school if they have concerns. The school is interested in what students think and values their views on how things can be improved. Year and school councils help in this process with recent examples including a change of uniform for girls and the provision of a pay phone. The sixth form prefects' committee makes a very valuable contribution by making its views known to senior staff. However, a significant number of students feel that the school does not listen to their views. Inspectors agree that whilst the school's processes for consulting students are generally satisfactory, there is a need for a more systemic approach with feedback on issues raised and suggestions made.
49. The last inspection report commented on the inadequacy of medical rooms and this remains an issue. There is no medical room in the upper school and the one in the lower school is rarely used because the location makes it very difficult to supervise students who are ill. Notwithstanding this, the standard of care given to students who are taken ill is very high.

Sixth form

50. Very good induction arrangements into the sixth form enable students quickly to settle in to their new environment, to undertake their responsibilities and increased workload. A good feature is a welcome buffet lunch where tutors and students can meet informally. New entrants to the sixth form from other schools feel they are very well supported. Tutors give very good support to the students with their learning and with their applications for university places. Very good careers advice is available to students and the use of a careers library, the Internet and software is encouraged to promote greater awareness of career opportunities.
51. The progress and attendance of students is carefully monitored by tutors and review meetings take place regularly. Occasionally, difficulty is experienced by tutors in keeping appointments with students because of their lower school responsibilities, but the situation is improving.
52. Students in the sixth form have some opportunities to express their views on a range of school matters. The prefects' weekly meeting provides an excellent forum for discussion and is attended by a member of staff who follows things up and reports back. Prefects are particularly sensitive to the needs of younger students in the school and raise issues on their behalf.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnership with parents is good. Links with the community and with other schools and colleges are also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Written information to parents is of a good quality.
- Parents support the school and are appreciative of the education provided for their children.
- Involvement with the community and with other schools contributes well to the all round development of the students.
- The views of parents are not systematically sought.

Commentary

53. Parents receive helpful information about the school through a well-presented school prospectus and governors' annual report. The headteacher also sends a termly letter to parents. However, parents would like to receive more newsletters containing information about the events in the school and its successes. This is under consideration. Regular consultation meetings are held with parents when the progress of their children is discussed. The end of year reports set out clearly how students are progressing with some points for improvement. Parents are properly informed about the provision for students with special educational needs and the communication between home and school is good.
54. Although there is no parents' association, parents value the school's ethos and appreciate the very good efforts to educate their children. Attendance at parents' consultation evenings is very good and they support programmes to raise achievement such as 'Reaching for a C'. Although the school responds well to complaints and follows up parents' concerns promptly, it does not canvas the opinions of parents on a regular basis.
55. The school has good links with some of its local feeder primary schools and with high schools in the area. Learning mentors for Year 10 students are provided by a large national firm of accountants and reading support is given on a regular basis by employees from a London business firm. Students participate in community and partnership activities including charity fund-raising for the London Chest Hospital which is a near neighbour. The local community police take part in the citizenship programme. The school participates in many sporting activities with other schools in the London area. It also gets a great deal of support from local professional football clubs and sporting organisations.
56. Outside visits help to enrich the curriculum, such as visits to the Army Museum, a Hindu Temple, the battlefields in France and the Young Vic Theatre. Performing actors and dancers such as the Zimbabwe Dance Company visit the school to perform for the students.

Sixth form

57. Parents are kept very well informed about students' progress in the sixth form. Students are well supported in the university application process and with career advice and applications for work. The school also arranges residential visits to Cambridge University and has links with other colleges and educational institutions. These are all very helpful in enabling students to make informed choices about the

next stage of their education. Visits to and meaningful information about the various universities give students a realistic idea what university life and work will entail.

58. Sixth form students give considerable community service within the school, increasing their sense of social responsibility and civic awareness. The tasks include: being learning mentors to younger students, supporting school clubs, organising discos for the lower school and general assistance with the supervision of younger students. Sixth form students appreciate that they are trusted and valued for the valuable contribution they make to the school community as a whole.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is very good and management is good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent, with very good support from his senior colleagues. Staff with management responsibilities perform their roles well, although some subject leaders are more effective than others. The governance of the school is satisfactory. The school offers good value for money.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and the senior team provide clear vision and a very good sense of direction focused on raising standards and improving teaching and learning.
- Leaders at all levels make a highly effective contribution to promoting the school's excellent ethos.
- Governors are very supportive, but their direct experience of the school is limited.
- A good range of monitoring and evaluation strategies has been adopted to give a clearer view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but performance data is not used effectively enough to evaluate students' progress and set targets.
- Financial decision making is very good with good application of best value principles.
- Shortcomings in the availability of resources and the standard of accommodation are managed satisfactorily, but have an adverse impact of achievement and learning in a number of subjects.
- Good progress has been achieved in addressing the weaknesses in leadership and management identified in the last inspection report.

Commentary

59. The headteacher has been highly effective in taking the school forward since the time of the last inspection. Examination results have improved and the quality of teaching and learning is much better than it was. Many of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report, including the unsatisfactory approach to planning for improvement, the poor quality of curriculum development and the lack of effective procedures for evaluating the school's effectiveness have been addressed with some success. In addition, the headteacher has been able to establish a model of shared leadership throughout the school that is inclusive and values everyone's contribution. Senior colleagues on the leadership team have shown strong commitment to the same vision and values and have developed their roles with skill and enthusiasm. Strategic planning is very good.
60. Governors are very proud of the school and its traditions and attach great importance to maintaining its Christian ethos. They work well with the headteacher to provide

strategic direction and ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties. Through their governing body meetings and committees, they monitor the school's results and make a good contribution to the formulation of the development plan. Governors have relatively limited contact with the day-to-day experiences of teachers and students, however. They have no links with curriculum areas and make few visits to see the school in action. This limits their capacity to evaluate the school's effectiveness.

61. The contribution middle leaders make to the leadership and management of the school is good overall. Year leaders are very effective and work well with tutors to meet the individual needs of the students in their care. Subject leadership is very good in history and mathematics, good in art, English, science, citizenship, modern foreign languages, design and technology and satisfactory in most other subjects. The leadership of special educational needs is good. In many subjects, however, performance data is not used effectively enough to evaluate students' progress and set targets.
62. At their most effective, subject leaders promote strong teamwork, take responsibility for monitoring and evaluating their own work and that of their colleagues and share best practice in teaching and learning. The school's approach to self-evaluation is good and has some strong features. A quality assurance strategy is unfolding in a way that rightly devolves responsibility for monitoring and evaluation increasingly upon subject leaders and the members of their teams. Further support is needed from senior staff to ensure that all those involved are able to meet these expectations, however. Good use is made of additional income from sources such as the Leadership Incentive Grant and Excellence in Cities funding to enhance the quality of leadership in the school.
63. The way the school manages its staffing is very good. Arrangements for professional development, including provision for newly qualified teachers, are good. Staff recruitment and retention inevitably present a significant challenge to schools in the London area and the positive climate at the school makes it a very attractive place to work despite the limitations of the physical environment. Excellent relationships and a genuine care for individuals help to ensure that staff, both teaching and non-teaching, feel valued and want to stay. Arrangements for the induction of new staff are very good and performance management is organised in a way that helps people to grow professionally. Administrative staff make a valued contribution to the day-to-day running of the school.
64. Financial decision making is very good with a very good match between budget planning and the school's educational priorities. Staffing is the key priority and thus little money is available to tackle areas of unsatisfactory provision with regard to learning resources and accommodation. The £153,000 balance mentioned in the table below has, for example, been allocated to the purchase of much needed ICT resources. Parents are also concerned about the poor state of some of the school's facilities. Action is needed to address these shortcomings, particularly where they have an adverse impact on standards. In addition, as things stand at present, the school is unable to meet the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 because access to areas of the buildings is a major problem. Under the circumstances, the school manages its split site situation with a reasonable degree of success.

Sixth form

65. The very good leadership of the school and the way it is managed effectively benefits the sixth form. The headteacher and the governors attach great importance to the strengthening of the sixth form and to ensuring that it has a significant role in the school as a whole. Sixth formers are given a high profile within the school.
66. The leadership provided by the head of sixth form is very good and is very effective in responding to the academic and pastoral needs of students with very good support from the team of tutors. She has a very clear vision for the further development of the sixth form and works tirelessly to achieve this. The sixth form is well managed and has an excellent ethos. Much has been done in the last two years to develop a climate that encourages self motivation among the students and a pride in belonging to the school.
67. Subject leadership in the sixth form is usually very good and well focused on the task of ensuring high quality teaching and learning.
68. There are shortcomings in resources and accommodation which make the experiences of students less than ideal, including the sharing of lessons between the two sites, but this is handled as well as possible.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,783,802	Balance from previous year	13,202
Total expenditure	4,617,453	Balance carried forward to the next year	153,147
Expenditure per pupil	4,970.35		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Speaking and listening skills are developed very well throughout the school.
- Students make good progress as a result of imaginative and well-structured teaching.
- Good leadership results in a strong teaching team focused on raising attainment.
- Marking is thorough but does not always indicate what a student should do to improve.
- Students from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds work together very well and their achievement is good.

Commentary

69. In the national tests taken in 2003 by 14-year-old students, results were in line with the national average. Provisional results in 2004 are much higher and significantly above expectations. GCSE results in 2003 were broadly in line with the national picture in English literature but significantly below in English language. English language improved in 2004, although English literature was less successful. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls who both achieved broadly in line with expectations, as did students from different ethnic groups.
70. Standards of English at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are above average. When students enter the school in Year 7, their standards are average. Their examination results in the current year represent good achievement as they have moved through the school. When they reach Year 11, higher attaining students have progressed well and they write at considerable length on fairly demanding texts. They are skilled in analysis and use appropriate language to describe the style and intention of the author. Lower attaining students make steady progress and confidently tackle an appropriate range of tasks and, though they are not as analytical or accurate, they write descriptively and with imagination. Though, overall, the attainment of boys and girls is similar, the school has correctly identified the need to continue to focus on boys' writing in order to improve accuracy and range.
71. Standards of speaking and listening are high. Students have very good opportunities to discuss in groups, pairs and whole-class activities and share their ideas in all lessons. Students from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds work together very well, respect each other's ideas, listen carefully and express their views logically, clearly and, at times, passionately. Teachers respect students' views and they are encouraged to support their ideas with well-chosen examples.

Example of outstanding practice

English lesson for mixed ability Year 8 group identifying key features of mythological writing as part of a study of 'Skellig'.

The teacher's plan for the lesson incorporated a range of activities which contributed to the brisk pace of the lesson. She led a discussion on the 'Persephone' myth, recording students' comments about the explanations of the natural and spiritual world. This was followed by animated discussions, in pairs, of a range of myths including those from Greek, Egyptian and Roman literature. The previous discussion was extended to include comments on divine and human characteristics of the hero and suggestions about the nature of the society from which it was drawn. Throughout, the teacher's questions were searching and inspired the students' interest. The lesson ended with a reminder about 'Skellig' and a moving retelling of the 'Adam and Eve' story by one of the boys, as an explanation of how sin came into the world. This also referred back to a drama lesson using 'Pandora's Box'.

72. Teaching is good and a significant number of lessons are very good or excellent. As a result, students learn well. The school's expectations, reflecting those in the national strategy for learning and teaching, are consistently implemented in all lessons. They underpin the agreed scheme of work, which is appropriate and reflects the requirements of the courses followed. Students of all attainments are able to develop their skills confidently, supported by a wide range of appropriate resources, film, photographic images, drama, Internet research and various approaches to the planning of written work. Higher attaining Year 10 students discussed the effects of directors' decisions on the portrayal of character in 'An Inspector Calls' making perceptive comments based on good knowledge of technique and character. A lower attaining class used the opening sequences from 'Notting Hill' and 'Tombstone' as the basis for a good discussion of stereotype and representation. A rich variety of learning activities is used so that students can learn in the way that suits them best. These contribute to students' ability to generate their own ideas and structure them in appropriate written forms showing awareness of subject, purpose and audience. Students' ability to use computers to present their written assignments is satisfactory and some assignments, on 'Gothic Horror' in the lower school for example, include planned opportunities for Internet use. However, assignments are often completed at home and access to ICT resources in the upper school is limited.
73. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to broaden students' understanding and encourage them to pursue the topic in greater depth. Time is used well in lessons and students have a very clear idea of what they are to learn and do. Written work is always marked using positive, encouraging comments. In many classes, students have a clear understanding of the standard they have attained and of what they must do to raise this. This is not always the case, however, and some teachers do not indicate how the work might be improved.
74. Management and leadership in English are good. Responsibility for media studies and drama has been delegated within the team and this also is very effective. The acting head of department leads the communications faculty, which has had considerable mutual benefits in

broadening skills in teaching and learning. The current very strong team has been established relatively recently. Examination and test results are now supported by systematic and appropriate development of skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing. The team has had a significant impact on achievement as evidenced by the work seen in books and in lessons. High expectations, consistent practice and a focus on improving the achievement of all students characterise the work. This is accompanied by the increasingly effective use of assessment to support tracking and target setting for individual students and groups. This has already focused attention on underachievers and, when fully established, will prove a valuable tool.

75. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. A steady decline in standards and disruption to the English team followed the inspection. This has been addressed and progress since 2002/2003 has been significantly improved.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

76. The school makes satisfactory provision for the development of students' literacy skills. In Years 7 to 9 standards are average with the greatest variation in spelling and grammatical accuracy seen in Year 7. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Teachers across the curriculum seek to develop standards of literacy in a variety of ways. Geography, ICT, science and mathematics emphasise accurate spelling and vocabulary and in some classrooms helpful word banks are displayed. Business emphasises communication and teaches students to write for specific purposes; a greater emphasis on students' own descriptions of investigations is given in science in Years 10 and 11. Throughout the school standards of handwriting and presentation are good and spelling is frequently very accurate.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

In Years 7 to 9, all students take French or Spanish, either of which they may opt to continue to GCSE in Years 10 and 11. Students do not at present have the opportunity to study more than one modern foreign language.

Provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching overall is good, and in Spanish it is very good.
- GCSE results in both French and Spanish improved substantially in 2004.
- Students show positive attitudes to language learning.
- Teacher assessments in Year 9 show that standards are below average.

Commentary

77. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that standards have been below average in recent years compared to those reported nationally. GCSE results in both French and Spanish were also below average in 2003, but in 2004 they were well above average in both subjects. There was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls and different ethnic groups. Higher attaining students did well.
78. The overall standard which students reach currently in Year 9 is in line with expectations. Higher attaining students can use a range of tenses in speaking and

writing, and students in general participate and achieve well in lessons. In Years 10 and 11, standards observed were above average. Students develop their communication skills well, using a wide range of expression in describing singers or sporting personalities, and can talk confidently about what they like and dislike about school and about their plans for the future. Achievement overall is good.

79. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all the lessons observed, and in half of them it was very good. Teachers show a good command of their languages, and have established them as the norm for communication in the classroom. They plan lessons carefully to include activities that correspond to the levels of attainment and interests of all groups within their classes. Students are expected to behave well in lessons and to work hard, and the great majority do so. In the best lessons, a very good pace and level of challenge were maintained, and students' interest was stimulated by, for example, the use of language games designed to reinforce learning of vocabulary and structures. However, lessons in French tended to concentrate too much on grammar rather than communication. Students have insufficient opportunities to use ICT in both French and Spanish. Students' written work is marked regularly, according to standards agreed by teachers in both languages; in Spanish in particular, teachers make comments which are sufficiently detailed to enable students to gain a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.
80. The leadership and management in the modern languages department are good. The two subject leaders work well together and with the other team members. They have taken effective steps leading to a significant increase in the number of students opting to continue with languages, as well as in the quality of results at GCSE. Policies and procedures are clearly outlined in the departmental handbook and in general are adhered to. In the rooms specifically dedicated to language teaching there are attractive and informative displays, including of students' work. Classes timetabled in non-specialist rooms do not have sufficient access to resources such as dictionaries. The languages office is inadequate; it is far too small to enable teachers to prepare for lessons and to meet informally. The department has undergone many changes, including personnel, since the last inspection. Progress, however, has been good; teaching in particular, including the use of the target language in lessons, has improved.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise is very good.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are very positive and contribute significantly to the learning environment.
- The recently appointed head of department positively promotes teaching and learning and provides a very good role model to other staff.
- Aspects of assessment are underdeveloped.
- ICT is not an integral part of students' mathematical experiences.

Commentary

81. In 2003 results in tests and examinations were in line with the national average for students in both Years 9 and 11. In 2004 results were again in line with national averages. There has been a positive trend in results for Year 9 in national tests in recent years. Students in Years 10 and 11 continue to make good progress. As a result of instability in staffing the percentage of students gaining A* to C in Year 11 in 2004 fell slightly, but the department is now fully staffed with specialist teachers. Students from ethnic minorities in all years perform well and achieve in line with their peers. There is no difference in the achievement of girls and boys. Students with high levels of attainment do well. Students with English as an additional language make good progress. Standards currently seen in lessons are above average and students' achievements are good.
82. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good and sometimes very good or excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They demonstrate enthusiasm and enjoyment for mathematics. Students' attitudes are very good and they are able to discuss and analyse their work productively. A variety of teaching strategies and resources are being used derived from the National Numeracy Strategy. These are having a positive impact on students' motivation. For example, as a starter for a Year 7 class, students were asked to identify as many triangles as possible from a complex diagram. Individual students were invited to the front of the class to discuss their answers. Supported by the teacher they were encouraged to use accurate mathematical terminology.
83. In all lessons, students are engaged and demonstrate very good concentration and behaviour. Often, where teaching and learning are excellent, teachers use questioning to challenge and extend pupils' mathematical thinking. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on simplifying algebraic expressions, students were asked to 'Think of another way to write these?' when expanding expressions with brackets. The teacher successfully introduced the idea of partitioning, bridging the students' experiences in long multiplication to algebra.
84. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are good. All classes are timetabled with specialist teachers who have very good subject knowledge. Together with the students' desire to explore new mathematical knowledge, this creates a vibrant and lively mathematical community. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, a calculator linked to the overhead projector was used to explore the use of Pi for finding the circumference of a circle and to round the answer to a number of decimal places. The students were able quickly to recall the rules for rounding and move onto more complex problems.

Example of outstanding practice

Mathematics lesson with a lower attaining set in Year 11. A unit of work on the area and circumference of a circle.

Following an excellent start to the lesson with very effective questioning by the teacher, students demonstrated excellent recall of their work from a previous lesson. The teacher very skilfully encouraged the small number of girls in the group to take part. Students approached the tasks set with real enthusiasm and worked at a fast pace to the challenging timescales set. While this was happening, the teacher circulated to provide individual support and provided coaching for a small group of students who had

missed the previous lesson. Higher attaining students were extended by the setting of examination questions which lead to the award of higher grades. Particular strengths of the teaching included excellent subject expertise which led to suitable challenges being set for all the students and the establishment of a highly positive ethos which encouraged everyone to do their best. An excellent discussion towards the end of the lesson demonstrated what everyone had achieved.+

85. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. All teachers set homework and books are marked regularly. Teachers keep accurate records of students' progress and often use these to inform their planning. However, many teachers fail to provide constructive feedback comments in their marking to enable students to know what to do to improve. The use of prior attainment data, to enable teachers to set targets, is only in the early stages of development. This means that, particularly in the lower school, students are unsure as to how well they are doing relative to their potential.
86. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Expert teaching continues to impact positively on students' learning and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. The schemes of work now detail where resources can be used and teachers are confident in their use for teaching and demonstration. Students often use calculators appropriately to explore patterns in number. The use of computers to extend students' learning is developing and further initiatives in this area are planned. Enrichment activities are available for the gifted students in Years 7 to 9.
87. Relationships are very good. Teachers provide excellent role models and share a commitment to improving standards and achievement for all students. Students work very well together and respect each other's needs. Students are given opportunities to develop and enhance their mathematical thinking through group and paired discussion. Accurate mathematical language is used throughout to provide a rich learning culture. Students and teachers are encouraged to take risks in their learning with no fear of ridicule or harassment.
88. The newly appointed head of department provides very good leadership with a strong focus on teaching and learning. She has a clear vision for development. This is shared with other teachers and promotes a collegiate approach. She recognises there is much to do and has sensibly prioritised, initially focusing on raising standards in Years 10 and 11, tracking students' progress and increasing the use of ICT.
89. The quality of management is very good. Since her appointment, the head of mathematics has worked hard to establish systems and procedures that support the quality of teaching and learning. Monitoring and evaluation of the department's work is in place and short and medium- term plans have been reviewed following an initial audit. Further work is underway to ensure that these processes become fully embedded in the culture of the department.

Mathematics across the curriculum

90. Standards of numeracy across the curriculum are good and students use and apply their mathematics in a variety of subjects. For example, in geography, students use data confidently and accurately to interpret statistical tables, and in science they can use simple equations and draw lines of best fit. This year the science, design and

technology and geography departments are working with the numeracy co-ordinator to include numeracy within their schemes of work.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An enthusiastic, committed teaching team which is raising standards.
- Interested, well-mannered and well-motivated students.
- A very effective system of assessment.
- Improving results in all years.
- Incomplete work is not always followed up; more constructive comment would help students to improve standards.

Commentary

91. Standards are in line with what is expected nationally at the end of Year 9 and above average by the end of Year 11. Achievement is good overall. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls and students of different ethnic groups do well. Students of different levels of attainment make good progress. On entry, students come with national test results from Year 6 that are at or above the national average, but six months later they are not performing so well. The school's assessments in Year 7 confirm that the standard on entry is below average therefore.
92. By the end of Year 9 national test results match expected levels and are rising at a similar rate to what is found nationally. In GCSE examinations, double award results have been increasing steadily over recent years with 2003 results above the national average, and 2004 even better for A*-C grades and A*-G grades. In the first year group to sit the single award examination all but two students gained grades in the A-G range, of which about one third were grade C, the top grade available for the foundation level.
93. In the work seen, progress in Years 7 to 9 is steady with students developing practical skills and extending their scientific vocabulary. A wide variety of topics is covered and students become used to regular assessment and being informed of the level at which they are working. There is little difference in the work of boys and girls in the laboratory, practical or written, but more boys gain the higher levels in national tests at the end of Year 9. By Year 10, students have experienced the different sections of investigative work and begin to carry out complete investigations independently. Students take pride in showing their work to a visitor and discuss it frankly. They use the Internet widely to research facts and broaden their knowledge, and their written record is generally neatly written and tidily presented.
94. By Year 11 more confident students can explain the theory behind their experiments, and given a 'but what if . . . ?' question can give a reasoned argument to back up their decisions. Practical work in these last two years is more confident and competent, with accurate measurements and results recorded logically. There is often healthy competition to achieve acceptable results. Students with special educational needs,

even without the help of non-teaching assistants, match their peers orally and practically, and cannot usually be identified except by the quality of their written work. Their progress matches that of their classmates.

95. The standards of teaching and of learning never fell below satisfactory and are good overall. Teachers' expectations are high and lessons are well paced with plenty of challenge. Careful planning, clear explanation and enthusiastic and knowledgeable teaching all result in good learning. However, teachers have difficulty in raising standards further due to the continued use of elderly equipment. All pupils are included in the work in progress, with special effort put into involving shyer individuals. Marking is up to date and acknowledges good work, but students would benefit from more written comment on how to improve. Regular assessment identifies faltering progress and underachievement and keeps students informed of their attainment and progress. Very high quality relationships between students and teachers mean that class control is achieved with a very 'light touch' and students strive to do their best. Although some low attaining students lack self-control and can be noisy, there was no disruptive behaviour that had an adverse effect on the rest of the class.
96. The department is well led and managed, and the entire team is clearly committed to achieving the best possible results for each student. Despite financial constraints, teachers do the best possible job with the resources and accommodation available. Good teaching is invariably underpinned by good technician support, and this is provided on both school sites by dedicated technicians. Laboratories are made more cheerful by good displays of reference material and students' work, in which they take great pride. The recent arrival of new equipment means that the former omission of the requirement for automated data capture will soon be overcome. With improving examination results, higher standards of both teaching and learning and all the comments of the last report now addressed, improvement has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ICT is provided for all students in Years 10 and 11.
- Thoroughly prepared and supported coursework helps students in Years 10 and 11 in their examinations.
- Management of ICT is poor, especially in the organisation of ICT across the curriculum.
- Cross-curricular opportunities for the use of ICT are insufficiently developed.
- Assessment of ICT skills, both in ICT taught as a subject and by other subjects, is poor, particularly for students in Years 7 to 9.
- Across the school, students' use of the Internet to research information is good.

Commentary

97. Standards are below average by the end of Year 9. By this stage students should have had significant experience in a range of software and be assessed according to

standardised methods. It is clear that plans are underway to ensure this is done in the future, with planned termly assessments; however, to date, there has been no formal method of assessment, and little evidence of marked work in students' books and portfolios. The standards seen in lessons are in line with national expectations in the use of presentation and desktop publishing software, but below expectation in control technology. Students are taught how to use the Internet effectively and have good keyboard skills. Higher attaining students are not reaching a high enough standard. There are no significant issues with regard to gender or ethnicity.

98. Standards by the end of Year 11 are in line with national expectations and achievement is satisfactory overall, although higher attaining students are not achieving what they are capable of. For two years, 2003 and 2004, students took the GNVQ course in Information Technology at Intermediate or at Foundation Level. Results in the first year were below national expectation and the course was phased out. Results in the second year were much improved however and in line with national expectation. All students now study ICT either as a GCSE course, or as a business and ICT GCSE course, so all are receiving suitable ICT education in Years 10 and 11. Not all students join the course of their choice and ICT is a less popular option.
99. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory, and this is reflected in the unsatisfactory behaviour seen in some lessons. Work is at a slow pace, with no high targets being set for the higher attainers. For example, in a Year 8 logo lesson they achieved no more than the class average in terms of their use of angles or complexity of commands. In a Year 9 lesson using desktop-publishing there was no time limit on a fairly mundane formatting task, nor extension activities to encourage higher attainers to move on faster. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teachers are specialists which is reflected in their very good knowledge of the software being used. Students are keen to get on with their coursework, which is closely monitored and assessed. Teachers use the classroom projector to do clear helpful demonstrations, and have GCSE teaching resources online for students to access. There is good use of question and answer, to which most students respond co-operatively. The teachers are making a good contribution to the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills by the students they teach. A lot of the revision work seen was very factual, and would have been improved by relating the theory to aspects of ICT in society.
100. Learning is generally at a slow pace in Years 7 to 9, not helped by the fact that computers are not always working efficiently. In Years 10 and 11 most students are learning at an appropriate rate while producing their coursework. The start to the lessons has good pace, but once at their computers the lower attainers tend to lose concentration, while the higher attainers are not being stretched by the demands of the coursework which is organised in a very prescriptive style. Some students lack of technical skill is a reflection on the learning in Years 7 to 9, for example, not knowing how to change the page borders in their desktop-publishing. One Year 10 group had no girls in it at all and this needs to be considered in the way options are managed, as the ethos of the group was far more negative than in other teaching groups. Consideration should also be given to how attractive the subject is to Year 9 girls who would probably respond to more co-operative activities.

101. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory overall. Leadership has been effective in promoting the use of ICT by the provision of a lot of new computing equipment and software. However, this is not managed well yet as teachers still have difficulty with access to the equipment, which also suffers from problems of incompatibility and instability. Ongoing training of staff and the auditing of hardware use is lacking. Leadership has ensured that all Year 10 and 11 students benefit from an examination course in ICT. The management of GCSE courses is effective, although schemes of work are not yet in place. The major problems of management of the course in Years 7 to 9 remain to be addressed in terms of current lack of assessed work, target setting and continuity, as well as in establishing suitable schemes of work and support for less experienced ICT teachers. On balance, however, satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection when this aspect of the school's provision was a key issue for action.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

102. Improved use is made of ICT by the mathematics, geography and design and technology departments though shortcomings remain. The use of ICT is satisfactory in business education and in leisure and tourism. ICT is still not being used adequately, or at all, in science, English, modern foreign languages, history and physical education. The use of the school website to host learning material from ICT, science, sociology and geography is an excellent innovation which can be developed for use by all departments in the coming year. The management of cross curricular ICT is not the responsibility of the head of the ICT department, however, and currently other departments are not supported sufficiently in using the considerable amount of new equipment that is now available. There is little evidence that national initiatives are, as yet, having an impact on teaching and learning; for example, much of the software purchased with e-learning credits is not yet in use. Despite these shortcomings there has been some sound progress since the last inspection.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 has raised standards significantly.
- A good range of imaginative activities stimulates interest.
- Teachers' expectations are insufficiently high in Years 7 to 9.
- Information and communication technology is not used enough.

Commentary

103. The most recent GCSE results show that standards have improved significantly in one year and are now at expected levels. This represents good achievement over time from average standards on entry. Girls and boys do equally well and as well as their peers nationally and students of different ethnic groups do well. Students are entered

for appropriate levels ensuring the success of both higher and lower attaining students.

104. By the end of Year 9 standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Written work indicates satisfactory knowledge and understanding of human activities and physical processes. The understanding of higher attaining students is expressed well both orally and in writing. Students with specific literacy difficulties struggle without the support of modified resources. By the end of Year 11 standards rise and achievement is good. Written work shows more in-depth understanding of factors contributing to events such as flooding. Opportunities to debate conflicts of interest relating to conservation and development are used well and develop citizenship skills. Students work well and use guidance material, fieldwork opportunities and ICT to produce creditable coursework.
105. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is consistently good in Years 10 and 11 where revision techniques such as mental mapping and activities such as role-play and debate stimulate interest and systematically extend learning. Skilful questioning probes understanding and promotes good thinking skills. Teachers are equally skilled in devising creative and imaginative activities such as a game of snakes and ladders to illustrate positive and negative aspects of settlement and using tactics such as the teacher wearing layers of warm clothing in a hot classroom to provoke discussion on adaptation to climate. However despite these good ideas and the fun they generate, learning is limited in Years 7 to 9 where planning does not always meet the needs of all students in mixed ability groups and expectations are insufficiently high with regard to the pace of independent learning and the quantity of work to be done. Marking although supportive does not inform students how to improve the quality of their work. Target setting is inconsistent and ICT is not used enough. Teaching benefits from the positive attitudes and behaviour of the students.
106. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The subject leader is new to the post and has as yet not undertaken monitoring or fully implemented the new self-assessment and target setting procedures. The recently reviewed schemes of work are very good. The same strengths noted at the last inspection persist but other than improved standards and independent learning, so do the weaknesses. The lack of a subject base in both parts of the school, the way teachers and resources are scattered across the school, the shared rooms and the lack of ICT resources hinder achievement. Assessment is now regular but testing does not accurately reflect capabilities and National Curriculum levels are still not used. The lack of a database prevents the evaluation of student progress across year groups and does not assist planning. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well by the end of Year 9 and very well by the end of Year 11.
- The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11; on occasions it is excellent.
- The department is very well led and managed.

- GCSE results were slightly above those for all maintained schools in 2003 and were improved in 2004; they were above those in most other subjects in the school.
- Monitoring teaching and learning is not sufficient to enable the head of department to evaluate the work of the department fully.

Commentary

107. In GCSE in 2003, results were slightly above the average for all maintained schools. The percentage of boys and girls who achieved grades A*-C was above the national average, with girls achieving more grades A*-A than boys in 2003. In 2004 the results were better than those for 2003. This improvement follows the trend in recent years. In the national assessments at the end of Year 9 students achieved results in line with national averages in 2003 and 2004. Students from all ethnic groups do well.
108. Currently students in Year 9 achieve good standards. Students identified as having special educational needs make good progress, a result of the support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls, though girls are more reticent to contribute orally in class. The range and quality of students' written work is good, though less than satisfactory literacy skills interrupt the flow for a significant minority; the quality of written work of the higher-attaining students is very good. Students show a good understanding of key historical concepts and vocabulary. By Year 9 they comment upon the validity of primary sources well, as in a class where they considered sources for their content, origin and reliability. By Year 11 standards are above average. Students can extract and prioritise information from sources, as in a lesson where students progressed well in their ability to plot the effects of factionalism in the Women's Movement at the beginning of the 20th century. They can formulate an argument and organise evidence to support it. They make very good progress in understanding the historical links across countries, as in their work on the New Deal.
109. Students of all ages have positive attitudes to study; they enjoy history. They concentrate well in Years 7 to 9, which contributes to their good learning. In Years 10 and 11 their enthusiasm for the subject is even more evident, which, along with the very good teaching, explains the effectiveness of their learning. In all years they work effectively individually and together. They work hard and seek to meet teachers' usually high expectations, improving their skills. Students take care in the way they present their written work.
110. The overall quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good; it is very good in Years 10 and 11. There are examples of excellent teaching. The quality of planning is good and in line with the National Curriculum. Teachers have clear objectives, which are shared with the students, and they use a range of good teaching strategies. This was demonstrated in an outstanding lesson in Year 8, where the teacher engrossed students using text, video and illustrations to further their learning on the Great War. Very good questioning technique is a feature of the best teaching, as in a Year 11 lesson on the use of sources where students were challenged to explore 'what is the question asking us to do?' Teachers support students well, assessing how well they are dealing with tasks as they move among them in lessons. Marking is variable, with some examples of detailed helpful comments and others where there is too much

marking with a tick. In the majority of classes teachers' assessments further students' learning effectively, with individual targets being set to help them improve their work.

Example of outstanding practice

History lesson with a mixed ability group in Year 10. The topic was Germany's reaction to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, 1919.

An excellent lesson based on a wide range of sources including posters, speeches and newspaper articles. A very good variety of approaches to learning was involved. Students demonstrated a critical awareness in exploring the issues that affected the terms of the treaty while also coming to an understanding of why it caused such hostility in Germany. Members of the class worked in groups at a fast pace to prepare presentations which required them to present their findings clearly, concisely and persuasively. The very positive outcomes of this exercise were based on research competences and negotiating skills of a high order. This provided an excellent opportunity for students to consider moral issues in the context of international relations. Students' achievement in all this was excellent and the lesson concluded with the teacher skilfully preparing them for further work on this topic.

111. The department is very well led and very well managed. The head of department provides an excellent role model for the rest of the staff, whom she supports well despite the split site. Together with staff she is updating documentation and using assessment analysis, especially in Years 10 and 11, to identify which students require extra support. Lesson observation is limited to the two lessons required in the school's system of performance management, but students' work is sampled. The departmental handbook and scheme are well structured. The subject makes a good contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of students and enriches their experiences through visits locally and abroad.
112. Improvement since the last report has been good. Standards and the quality of teaching have improved markedly, though there is still some satisfactory teaching in Years 7 and 8. Monitoring of teaching and learning is still underdeveloped.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students gain good results in tests and assessments at the end of Year 9.
- Achievement in textiles and graphics is good.
- GCSE results in resistant materials are below average.

Commentary

113. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above average. According to teacher assessments, the percentage of students achieving National Curriculum Level 5 and above is well above the national expectation. These results represent very good achievement in relation to standards on entry.

114. In work seen during the inspection, students show very good skills in graphics and textiles. They are able to construct a design brief and pursue it through stages of development to a conclusion. In resistant materials there are evident skills in cutting and shaping in the process of constructing devices, a 'clacker rattle', for example. Work is presented carefully and, where appropriate, annotated.
115. In GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, results vary between options. The highest number of passes at grades A*-C in the two most recent years have been gained in electronics. Staffing problems, however, stemming from the departure of the specialist teacher in this area, have led to a marked drop in results in the most recent year. Results in textiles and graphics have been around the national average but results in resistant materials have been below the national average and depress the overall GCSE results to below average. Overall, the progress and achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. There is evidence of good designing and making skills in textiles and lively, imaginative design in graphics.
116. The quality of teaching and learning, overall, is good. In the two best lessons, students were appropriately challenged in well-planned sessions using a variety of teaching strategies. In some less stimulating lessons, there is too great an emphasis on theoretical and written work. There is an apparent reluctance in some areas to become involved in practical work, teachers taking refuge in extensive evaluation and filling in of worksheets. Students are less enthusiastic about this kind of work than about practical work. The quality of learning, however, is good overall. Students with special educational needs make good progress in response to sensitive teaching, and those with special talent are able to develop their ideas fully.
117. The quality of leadership and management is good. Significant problems in staffing for electronics have been met resolutely. Good assessment procedures have been developed and are used effectively. Documentation is comprehensive and informative. There is a realistic acceptance of the fact that major changes in accommodation and staffing would be needed to mount courses in food technology.
118. Improvement has been good since the last inspection. The department has improved the teaching to develop skills in lettering and the use of colour, and standards have improved both at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE at the end of Year 11.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students attain high standards in Years 7 to 9.
- Results in GCSE examinations, at the end of Year 11, are well above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning, overall, is very good.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

119. At the end of Year 9, in tests and assessments, a very large proportion of students have gained National Curriculum Level 5 or above over the last two years. These results are very high in comparison with the national expectation and represent very good achievement and progress from standards on entry to the school with no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys and among different ethnic groups. In GCSE examinations, at the end of Year 11, students have gained high results compared with national averages over the same period of time. This constitutes sustained very good progress and achievement in Years 10 and 11.
120. Work seen in Years 7 to 9 shows high levels of imagination and creative ability. Students produce very good quality designs, in some instances based upon music, employing colour and rhythm very effectively. Notebooks show how ideas are developed and provide a very good record of progress. Work in pattern and printmaking also reaches a high standard.
121. A feature of work by students in Years 10 and 11 is their capacity for independent learning. Students display creative self-confidence in their projects and develop good skills in three-dimensional work, including modelling and casting. ICT is used in research and in the furthering of ideas. Students also develop a good grasp of specialist terminology as an aspect of their experience of literacy.
122. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Lessons are planned thoroughly and ambitious projects introduced, such as project work linking art and music. These ideas are pursued with determination and commitment. A strength in the teaching is the sensitive quality of individual help and encouragement which promotes very good progress by students with special educational needs and those with a special talent for art. Students work very well in response to the teaching. Their progress is aided by their very good behaviour in class and learning is promoted further by very good teacher-pupil relationships. Students' work is assessed very carefully and progress is tracked methodically from year to year. Assessment is used in the planning of work and in setting targets for groups and individuals.
123. The quality of subject leadership and management is good, the subject being led with enthusiasm and commitment. Relationships within the department are very good with a shared interest in the continuing development of the subject. Many important innovations have been introduced in recent years. Examples of students' work are displayed in studios together with grade descriptions. These enable students to understand assessment and examination requirements and to evaluate their own progress. Self-assessment sheets, which have been introduced, reinforce students' awareness of their attainment.
124. Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant improvement in standards and in areas of the teaching. Learning intentions are now clear and are fully shared with students. Certain weaknesses, however, persist. The accommodation provided militates against the further development of the department. Resources for learning are adequate, generally, but the lack of a high-speed printer restricts progress in ICT.

Drama

Drama and expressive arts are taught within the English department and these, together with performing arts were sampled during the inspection.

Provision for drama is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is not included in the curriculum in Years 8 and 9.
- Where students have the opportunity to take drama they achieve very well.
- Learning and teaching are good.

Commentary

125. In 2003 students' results in GCSE drama were below average and significantly lower than their results in other subjects. Results in 2004 matched the national average with the boys doing slightly better than the girls.
126. Drama is taught within expressive arts in Year 7. In the lesson seen the quality of students' work was very good and they responded very well to the challenges offered. Student' attitudes were excellent and they worked consistently well, resulting in very high achievement. Students of all levels of attainment achieved well and those with special educational needs made good progress. Teaching was excellent and reflected a depth of subject knowledge, consistent challenge and imaginative approaches to learning. These included the use of 'Scrolls' containing level descriptors which were a constant reference point throughout the lesson as students refined and developed their skills. Relationships between the teacher and the group were excellent and students worked with energy and obvious enjoyment. Drama is not included in the curriculum of Years 8 and 9. This does not support the systematic development of skills through to Years 10 and 11.
127. In a Year 11 GCSE class, teaching and learning were good with excellent organisation of learning activities to develop and deepen students' understanding of 'Animal Farm' which helped students to achieve very well. Students concentrated and co-operated very well and there was no significant difference in achievement on the basis of gender or ethnicity. Progress was good and standards appropriate, reflecting the range of students' attainment. The teacher had very good subject knowledge and excellent understanding of how students learn. She conveyed her high expectations to the class through probing questions and coaching of individuals.
128. Leadership and management of drama are good. The planned curriculum is appropriate where it is offered in Year 7 and at GCSE where it reflects the course requirements. In Year 7, drama is only one component of expressive arts and as such has limited time available to it. Provision for the subject is only satisfactory despite the very good practice observed. This judgement reflects the lack of curriculum continuity and the unsatisfactory space available for drama, which, particularly in the lower school, is not appropriately equipped to meet the requirements of this practical subject. This was commented on in the previous inspection and some improvements have been made to provision in the main school to meet examination requirements more effectively.

PERFORMING ARTS

129. This course was sampled and two lessons observed. Standards were in line with expectations and students' achievement was good reflecting the good teaching and learning in the subject.
130. In a Year 10 lesson which focused on the role of the choreographer as part of a study of motif and development, the class discussed and developed their ideas referring to 'recurrent motifs', drawing on a practical dance session from the previous week. They understood the issues involved and responded well to the challenge. The teacher had produced a good set of prompts to guide the work and maintained a brisk pace while ensuring that the class had sufficient opportunity to explore and share their ideas.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students display good attitudes and behaviour.
- Students make insufficient progress because of weaknesses in teaching.
- Limitations in accommodation and resources restricts students' musical opportunities.
- The department lacks a coherent strategy to improve standards.

Commentary

131. 2003 GCSE music results were poor. Standards in Year 9 are average, representing unsatisfactory achievement given students' standards on entering the school. Standards in Year 11 are below average and represent unsatisfactory achievement. Throughout Years 7 to 11 students learn to use electronic keyboards to perform and compose with some confidence. However their level of rhythmic accuracy and ability to co-ordinate performances with others is very variable in quality. Compositions rarely extend beyond simple formulae. Listening skills range widely in quality. Evaluative skills are weak and students have an insecure knowledge of musical terminology. There are no significant differences in standards and achievement according to gender or ethnicity. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory; students designated talented in music do not achieve as well as they could.
132. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Students' benefit from well disciplined lessons in which teachers use their own musical skills well to stimulate an interest in the subject. Limited resources are utilised effectively to ensure students experience a range of activities. Students' learning is restricted by poorly planned lessons in which aims are unclear and tasks are poorly explained. Work set is uninspiring and expectations are pitched too low. Students spend too long on simple tasks and are rarely challenged to extend their musical capabilities. They have no idea how well they are doing or what they might do to improve further. Homework is inconsistently set. Weaknesses in students' literacy and presentation go unchecked.
133. Leadership and management of music are unsatisfactory. The planning and content of the curriculum is dated, especially for music composition. Insufficient attention is

given to developing a strategy to raise standards based on an analytical review of the department's work. Unsatisfactory accommodation and resources restrict what students can achieve. Opportunities for students to engage in extra-curricular music making are good with three concerts a year in school and further engagements outside.

134. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory, especially in standards at GCSE and in the quality of teaching.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have excellent attitudes to physical education and sport.
- Talented students make very good progress because of additional extra-curricular opportunities.
- Teaching is very good, particularly in games activities.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of health and fitness is poor
- Teachers do not routinely inform students about how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve further.

Commentary

135. Students arrive at the school with very different experiences of physical education. In the activities observed during the inspection standards on entry were below expectation. Students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry so that, by the end of Year 9, standards are in line with expectation. Throughout Years 10 and 11 students continue to make good progress and show good standards in a range of activities. Talented students achieve very high standards. This is particularly true in basketball, which is a real strength of this school. GCSE results in 2004 were above average with 74 per cent of students entered achieving A*-C grades. The 2004 GCSE results showed no real difference in the attainment of girls and boys although, significantly, more boys entered than girls. Students with special educational needs participate fully in all aspects of physical education and achieve well.
136. Achievement is good because all groups of students work to the very best of their capability. Students are willing, focused learners who find the practical work challenging and exciting. The combination of natural athleticism, very good teaching and extra opportunities to practise and improve means that talented students achieve very highly, particularly, but not exclusively, in games. Achievement in the fitness and health element of the National Curriculum is poor. While students have the physical ability to participate in a range of activities they lack any real knowledge and understanding of fitness either generally or as it relates to the different activities in which they participate.
137. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is very good when teachers know their subject well and have high expectations. Teacher/student relationships are excellent and contribute to a purposeful learning environment in which students want to succeed and do well. Teachers are excellent role models, with an infectious enthusiasm for their subject that has captured students' interest and excitement for physical education. They set relevant and realistic challenges and use the time available to provide a range of activities and tasks that enable students to acquire, develop and refine skills and techniques and apply them in different contexts. A weakness of teaching is the lack of feedback students receive about how well they are doing. Students do not always know what they do well or what they need to do to

improve further. There is also no consistent approach to the marking of written work of GCSE students. Comments, when given, are too vague and do not tell them whether what they have written is acceptable or what else they might include or add to make it better.

138. The school continues to bus students to a range of very good facilities including all-weather pitches, athletics track, sports hall, climbing wall and fitness suite. Use of these quality facilities contributes to the overall achievement of students. However, the amount of time taken to travel to such venues means that achievement, given the good teaching and excellent attitudes students have to learning, is not as good as it might be for the groups of students who only access physical education and sport during curriculum time. The department does all it can to make a range of additional extra-curricular opportunities available. These opportunities have a positive impact on the standards achieved by students who show potential or talent. A number of these students have gained representative honours at local and national levels. Participation rates in these additional activities and opportunities have been acknowledged by the award of Sportsmark, which also recognises the contribution made by physical education and sport to the overall life of the school.
139. Leadership is satisfactory and management is good. Physical education is a difficult and complex subject to manage at this school because of the logistics involved in transporting students off site for almost every lesson and for nearly all extra-curricular activities and fixtures. In view of this, departmental meetings tend to focus on issues relating to the booking of facilities and organisation of fixtures rather than with issues to do with teaching and learning. Currently there are also insufficient opportunities for students to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills through physical education. Given the extensive need to use off site facilities the department is doing all it can to provide as many opportunities as possible, both within and beyond the school day, for students to be involved in high quality physical education and sport each week.
140. Progress has been good since the previous inspection, with girls' participation rates and involvement in GCSE physical education, in particular, continuing to improve.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business and communication systems is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are motivated to learn and apply themselves well.
- There is insufficient specialist accommodation and resources.
- Assessment for learning is adequate, but underdeveloped.
- The new course in Business and Communication Systems ensures that students' knowledge and understanding of ICT is applied in a realistic context.

COMMENTARY

141. The new course in business and communication systems has yet to be examined for the first time. However, students in Years 10 and 11 achieve average standards in their work, with a few examples of very good work. Students develop sound understanding of basic business concepts. For example, they demonstrated their understanding of the importance of key employability skills, such as appropriate communication, in a lesson about formal communication in the world of work.

Students' knowledge and understanding of ICT, e.g. creating and using databases, is also developed in realistic contexts.

142. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some variation between teachers. Some lessons are carefully planned with clear objectives set at the beginning, but the pace is not always appropriate and some students do not remain fully engaged. Higher attaining students are not always able to show what they know, understand and can do because there are insufficient opportunities for them to extend their depth of knowledge. Teacher/student relationships are excellent and provide a good basis for learning. Students receive very good encouragement individually. However, they do not always receive sufficient feedback to know how to raise the standard of their work. Not all students had a clear understanding of their levels of attainment or of target grades.
143. Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, the schemes of work do not extend much beyond the examination specification and the department action plan is basic. There is a need for more careful monitoring of the department's work to share best practice. Assessment is used to monitor progress. However, it does not inform curricular planning. Resources are limited in range. There are no up-to-date journals or business publications. Some classrooms are overcrowded. Progress made since the last inspection is satisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The co-ordinator provides good leadership in developing the course.

Commentary

144. Citizenship is taught as part of the school's Preparation for Adult Life (PAL) programme. Standards in Years 9 and 11 are above average and students achieve well. In 2004, students were entered for a GCSE examination in this subject for the first time. 42 per cent achieved passes at grades A*-C which was below the national average, but creditable given the fact that they had only studied the course for less than a year. In 2005 the first students to have taken the full programme will be entered and are expected to do well. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls and students of all attainments, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.
145. Students make good gains in the knowledge and understanding required to become informed citizens. They also develop appropriate skills to participate in society and form an understanding of how to behave responsibly. The course makes a very good contribution to the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

146. Teaching and learning are good overall. Some very good lessons were seen during the inspection. In a Year 10 lesson students conducted a session with a visiting police officer which provided an opportunity to consider a number of issues with regard to policing and in Year 11 a good lesson on Fair Trade prompted discussion of ethical issues affecting economic relations with developing countries. Students' attitudes were very good. Assessment is generally good, especially in Years 10 and 11 where coursework makes a contribution to the grade achieved in the GCSE examination.

147. Leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator is committed and has a clear view of how the subject needs to develop. He offers good support to others who teach the subject including the form tutors who usually teach the course in Years 7 to 9 and members of the more specialist team who teach the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. He is building up the resources needed to support the programme.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, [number of subjects and courses] 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 [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	1	100.0	80.1	0.0	23.7	20.0	29.9
Biology	2	50.0	65.2	50.0	11.1	25.0	20.6
Chemistry	2	100.0	72.7	0.0	13.9	35.0	24.1
Drama	4	100.0	86.5	25.0	19.6	40.0	30.6
Economics	2	0.0	73.6	0.0	20.1	0.0	26.4
English literature	3	66.7	85.9	0.0	19.1	23.3	30.2
General studies	62	50.0	73.9	4.8	17.8	14.2	25.7
Geography	3	66.7	74.3	0.0	19.8	16.7	26.5
Mathematics	1	100.0	61.9	0.0	17.1	20.0	22.1
Other sciences	4	0.0	71.4	0.0	15.8	0.0	24.3
Other social studies	4	75.0	69.7	0.0	16.7	20.0	24.1
Physics	2	50.0	68.6	0.0	14.4	10.0	22.7
Sociology	12	50.0	71.8	8.3	18.4	18.3	25.4
Sports/PE studies	4	100.0	73.2	0.0	11.4	27.5	23.1
Vocational studies	7	14.3	62.8	0.0	12.3	4.3	20.8

Total	113	52.2	73.9	5.3	17.4	15.8	25.7
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Level 3 GCE A 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	5	100.0	98.6	60.0	50.2	92.0	87.5
Biology	5	80.0	96.4	40.0	39.2	60.0	78.6
Business studies	12	66.7	98.7	0.0	36.8	36.7	80.1
Chemistry	2	100.0	97.6	0.0	49.0	80.0	84.9
Communication studies	6	100.0	99.4	33.3	37.8	80.0	82.1
English literature	8	100.0	99.5	0.0	46.5	55.0	86.5
Geography	11	100.0	98.7	36.4	44.5	78.2	84.0
History	7	100.0	99.0	14.3	44.6	68.6	84.6
Information and communication technology	10	90.0	95.6	50.0	24.6	84.0	69.5
Mathematics	7	100.0	96.7	71.4	55.6	94.3	88.8
Other sciences	21	100.0	97.3	19.0	41.5	77.1	80.3
Other social studies	7	100.0	97.4	14.3	42.7	54.3	81.8
Physics	4	100.0	96.7	50.0	44.6	85.0	81.7
Total	105	94.3	97.7	27.6	42.1	71.0	81.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

ENGLISH

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and students achieve well.
- Students enjoy English and are enthusiastic about their work.
- Teachers give good quality support and advice to individuals which contributes to good achievement.
- Access to ICT limits opportunities for some students.

Commentary

148. Results in 2003 were very low in English literature, but were better in 2004. All students passed the examination and 30 per cent attained an A*-B grade. Lessons observed and work in students' files confirm that current standards are at least in line with course expectations and a significant proportion exceeds these.
149. By Year 13, students are writing perceptive essays of appropriate length that show them able to construct a logical argument well. Their critical analysis is good. Approaches to literary criticism are taught systematically through Years 12 and 13 using a good range of resources and techniques, which encourage confidence and understanding.
150. Teaching and learning are good and at times very good. Teachers have a depth of subject knowledge and plan their lessons well using a variety of approaches. Because of this, students are enthusiastic about the subject and are able to work together and take advantage of the challenges offered. Relationships are good and students' ideas are respected and valued by their teachers. Students discuss energetically with each other and with their teachers, supporting their ideas with close textual reference. A Year 13 class, for example, explored the idea of Blake as a mystic out of touch with his own age. They had a good grasp of the context for the poet's work, drawing on their knowledge of history and philosophy. Achievement is good because they are encouraged to explore widely and to work to a high standard. They tackle challenging texts confidently, as in a Year 12 lesson on 'Othello' where they discussed and deepened their understanding as they explored the motivation of the key characters. Most written work is carefully marked and gives a clear idea of what must be done to improve and to achieve the required standards.
151. Leadership and management are good and clearly focused on raising attainment through well-organised courses and good levels of teaching. The teaching team is cohesive and staff work well together with a good sense of direction. Resources are adequate and include an appropriate range of written and film texts. Students use computers confidently but there is insufficient access to these within school time which limits opportunities for some students.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

152. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are in line with expectations. Some subjects make good provision for developing students' language skills. For example, in mathematics students were asked to construct an instruction list for using a spreadsheet and in science written work is well presented and word banks support students' writing. However, support for literacy is not consistently evident in all subjects.

SPANISH

Provision in Spanish is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and enables students to build on the skills they have acquired for GCSE.
- Students achieve well and show very positive attitudes to language learning.
- Students receive insufficient written feedback on their work.

Commentary

153. Spanish has only been taught in the sixth form since the beginning of this academic year and is at present the only modern foreign language provided to A-level. Ten students are currently studying Spanish at AS level.
154. Students began the course with a wide range of attainment at GCSE, having studied the language only in Years 10 and 11. They are consolidating their grasp of understanding, speaking and writing in Spanish. They can respond to relatively complex questions posed at normal speed, using a range of tenses and expressions and are beginning to acquire more advanced skills of analysis and discussion. Students progress well during lessons, making good use of the vocabulary and structures they have learned. Higher attaining students can speak and write with increasing fluency and accuracy, on topics such as the dangers of smoking. At present, however, the majority of students show more confidence and ability in understanding higher level language than in using it independently.
155. Teachers' expertise in the subject is very good, as is their use of Spanish during lessons. They provide a range of activities, including group and pair work, which enables students to develop their knowledge and understanding, particularly of the more complex grammatical structures encountered at this level, for example the different uses of the subjunctive. Students enjoy the lessons, particularly role-plays in which they can express opinions and justify them in a lively manner. They value the support they are given by their teachers, particularly on a one-to-one basis. However, they have as yet been given insufficient opportunities to practise extended writing in Spanish and the written feedback they have received on their work has been too limited to give them a sufficiently clear picture of what they need to do to improve.
156. The subject leader for Spanish has a clear vision of her role in continuing the development of the subject in the sixth form and of the role of languages in the curriculum and in society as a whole. The two teachers responsible for leading the course work well together as a team, valuing and building upon one another's contribution. Teaching is well planned and well coordinated, although the use of specialist resources, such as a newly installed interactive whiteboard, is limited by the fact that some lessons are scheduled in rooms in other subject areas. Furthermore, the need for the students and their teacher to move between the school's two sites during a double lesson reduces the amount of time available for teaching and learning. Spanish in the sixth form was not inspected during the last inspection.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average.
- Students' achievement is very good.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and contributes significantly to students' learning.

- The use of ICT needs to be further developed.

Commentary

157. Standards are well above the national average. Results at advanced level over recent years show a steady improvement from a very high base. Students' achievement is very good and reflects the commitment shown by teachers to ensure all students have access to a mathematically rich environment. Ethnic minority students achieve as well as their peers. For the higher attaining mathematicians there are opportunities to study the further mathematics course in Year 12. This is being developed as an innovative web-based course in Year 13. The introduction of a GCSE Statistics course has improved the learning opportunities for Level 2 students. For example in a Year 12 lesson students were able to apply their data-handling skills in a variety of situations using a computer spreadsheet.
158. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to challenge students to think independently and experiment with mathematical ideas. Their highly skilled questioning encourages students to discuss and explore mathematical relationships themselves. For example, with carefully chosen questions, in a lesson on the Cartesian equation of a circle, the teacher encouraged the students to discuss their methods. Having listened to each other's responses they selected the one that best suited their learning style. Assessment is good. Students are aware of how they are doing and what they have to do to improve. Teachers mark work and provide students with constructive feedback.
159. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good. They speak highly of the commitment of the teachers to high standards and the quality of their teaching. The quality of the mathematical language students use is very good and enhances their learning.
160. The head of department is a very good leader and effective manager of a very strong team of teachers. They consider different approaches to topics and share ideas. This is providing teachers with opportunities to develop further their range of teaching methods.

Mathematics across the curriculum

161. Students have good mathematics skills and use them appropriately in their various courses. For example in Year 12 Business Studies they use their mathematical skills accurately in key concepts such as long-term profit and zero budgeting.

SCIENCE

The main focus of the inspection was on physics, but biology, chemistry and applied science (GCSE) were also sampled. One lesson was seen in each of these disciplines and standards were in line with the expectations of the courses or better.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Committed and enthusiastic teaching intent upon raising standards despite poor resources.
- Good assessment procedures which keep students well informed.

- Well motivated, interested students who are enjoying the course.
- Increasing group sizes resulting in greater student interaction, improved learning and well planned and challenging lessons.

Commentary

162. Group sizes have varied enormously from year to year and comparisons with national averages are invalid for small groups, but the physics results for 2004 have improved upon the previous year. There is no clear trend to the results. Standards are currently satisfactory with no differences between the achievements of male and female students, or between students of different ethnic backgrounds. Students arrived expecting a higher standard of work after their GCSE course and are gradually becoming used to the independent learning that is required in advanced level work. They are enjoying the course and speak positively of it. Year 12 students are lively, enthusiastic and well motivated and interact and co-operate well in practical work. Written records are conscientiously done and student attitudes to more demanding work are mature and determined. This is even more obvious in the smaller Year 13 group.
163. Year 12 students have just encountered the need to design their own experiments, adapting and improving them as they go and learning from their own mistakes. Year 13 students, having already gone through this process, are better equipped to foresee possible difficulties and to look for and reduce potential sources of error in advance. Male students outnumber females but there is totally equal access to staff and resources, and no apparent difference in the standards of their work. Working together in pairs or small groups, close interaction with staff, the 'honest reporting' of results of whatever quality and respect for each other and for equipment all contribute to students' social and moral development. Retention of students, once the course has settled down, is good, although not all students choose to proceed to the second year.
164. The quality of teaching is good. There are equipment deficiencies, however, which mean that some important topics can only be treated theoretically because the apparatus needed for demonstration or experiment is unserviceable. Best use is made of what is available and difficulties are often overcome by ingenuity and persistence. Students appreciate the subject knowledge of staff and the informal, relaxed atmosphere of lessons allows good teaching and learning to flourish. Students are not afraid to ask questions or seek advice and know that they will always receive a sympathetic hearing. Lessons move at an appropriate pace and when extra support is needed, for instance over mathematical skills, these are developed with the individual in the context of the lesson. This is helped by students' willingness to help each other with minor problems. With this more difficult work, challenges abound, but these are met cheerfully and willingly. The standard of learning is therefore also good.
165. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. The course is well planned and makes good use of the elderly resources, but larger than normal groups are inevitable in practical work. Examination results and student numbers are both rising and students speak well of their experiences. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in the sixth form is good, stemming from the teachers' good subject knowledge.
- All sixth formers have very good access to computers.
- Coursework is thoroughly prepared and well assessed.
- Examination results are satisfactory at AS level and well above average at A2 level.

Commentary

166. Total entries at A2 level for information and communication technology are relatively small, but about half the students are achieving A or B grades reflecting the good standard of A level teaching seen. Coursework is thoroughly prepared and assessed so that students know what is expected of them. Some students study information and communication technology A-level for one year only and sit the AS examination. Of the 18 students who sat the 2004 AS examination, two achieved A or B grades and only one failed to pass. Students currently on these courses studied GNVQ information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11, many achieving merits or distinctions which is an excellent foundation for the advanced course. Standards and achievement are good. In future, candidates will have studied a GCSE ICT course.
167. Subject teachers have a good knowledge of the software, and are developing students' skills at an appropriate level. Most Year 12 students were able to use a range of functions to automate their spreadsheets, including macros, lookup tables and conditional formatting. Teacher demonstrations using a classroom projector aided understanding and enabled students to consider the fellow students' attempts to identify problems. In Year 13, students were working on forms and sub-forms to automate processes in a database. Thorough consideration was given to data validation and on how to test the aspects of the software solution. Class teachers spend a lot of time helping lower attaining students on a one-to-one basis to improve their work.
168. Learning is good, particularly by the higher attaining students who confidently use the software help text, as well as their textbooks to enhance their work with advanced features. Group sizes are still small and girls continue to be a small percentage of each group. Girls and boys are making equally good progress, although girls are less willing to contribute answers to the group. Peer support is a feature of all lessons. Learning would benefit from the provision of shorter-term targets, as coursework can be too open-ended for many students. Teachers ensure there is a mid-lesson break from the screen, however greater variation in teaching style would improve concentration in double lessons. Relating the practical work to more examples from society would enable students to see the wider picture, which is hidden from view by the emphasis on a single coursework task.
169. Management of the course is good and the course well resourced although the scheme of work is still under development. Progress in coursework is carefully tracked, however there is little evidence of other theory work. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

170. The use of ICT by sixth formers is good. They have access to a range of computers with Internet access for research. Students feel that their ICT skills are being developed in many subjects and many are making significant use of home facilities to support their work at school. Developments in e-learning are underway in other subjects and the school web site hosts a 'moral maze' which is an excellent example of a forum for discussion on difficult or sensitive moral issues. Students could be encouraged to support the school web site in many other ways, to the benefit of all.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well.
- AS and A-level results are average.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Fieldwork is used effectively to support learning.
- The provision of learning resources is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

171. In the 2003 A-level examination the students achieved results that matched the national average. In 2004 the number of passes remained steady although the number of students achieving the highest grades dropped. At AS level, students achieve well with a number studying geography for the first time. The school is flexible in enabling students to take up AS geography in Year 13 thus broadening their curriculum opportunities and enlivening the group dynamics.

172. Students like geography and the numbers choosing to study the subject in Year 12 and continuing with it into Year 13 are rising. They enjoy the topicality of some of the areas they study. They work hard and collaborate effectively in pairs or groups. Their knowledge of geographical terminology is good.

173. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan the lessons well so that the learning is sequenced clearly helping students to consolidate new information successfully. There is a good focus on helping students to know what they will need to learn in order to succeed in the examinations. Attention is given to the differing learning needs of students so that individuals, including students for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. All lessons seen were good and students were actively involved throughout. Students' work is generally assessed effectively so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to achieve well.

174. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory overall. There is good use of ICT in Year 13 through the use of the department's own weather satellite station and the provision of computers in one geography room on the upper school site. The lack of specialist rooms close together and the use of non-specialist rooms on the lower site

reduce the range of learning resources used, however and limit the opportunities to develop a higher profile for the subject. There has been insufficient progress on this issue since the last inspection.

175. Leadership and management are satisfactory as reflected in the clear scheme of work. The programme for fieldwork is well planned to reinforce the students' learning through well-chosen sites.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students have very positive attitudes to history.
- Students learn effectively and demonstrate very good achievement.
- Relationships between staff and students are very good and students have confidence in their teachers.
- Standards in A-level examinations have been below the national average in recent years.

Commentary

176. At A-level, students achieved well below average results when compared with maintained schools in 2003 and below average in 2002, though the number of candidates was too small to provide reliable comparisons. Boys performed better than girls. All candidates passed in 2004, but few achieved the higher grades. Most students have performed well in history when their results are compared with the results for other subjects in the school.
177. Achievement in the current Years 12 and 13 is very good, a result of the very good teaching. Students have a good historical vocabulary and can use different types of sources to reach well-supported judgements. This was well demonstrated in a Year 13 lesson, where they analysed sources concerning Stalin; students extracted information, assessed it and shaped effective judgements, which they articulated effectively. Students make very good progress in developing their skills of evaluation and interpretation and this explains their very good achievement. Consequently, it is likely that they will achieve better A-level results than previously, an indicator of this being the well-structured essays they are now producing.
178. Students relate well to one another and listen to points made by their peers. They respond very well to their teachers and through hard work further their learning. Students join in discussion, but tend to direct their responses to the teacher rather than challenging one another directly. Students' positive attitudes to history are demonstrated by the growing number taking the subject at AS and A-level.
179. The overall quality of teaching is very good; occasionally it is excellent. This encourages students to develop a mature approach to study. Teachers plan well and explain their objectives clearly and helpfully to students. A major strength of the teaching is the enthusiasm and commitment of staff, which helps students to value what they are doing. Teachers use questioning very effectively and have high expectations. They encourage students to respond orally, which ensures that oral

skills are being fully developed. Informal assessment is used well to identify areas in which students need support. Marking is regular and teachers provide detailed comments on essays, which help students to know how well they are doing and to understand how to improve their work.

180. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department manages through a process of consultation, which is appreciated by staff. She supports staff well and is organizing the updating of documentation. The departmental handbook and scheme are well structured. Students' assessments and examination results are carefully analysed. This helps the department to identify strengths and weaknesses and which students need particular help. This is a factor in improving achievement and standards. Students' experience is enriched through extra-curricular opportunities, which include visits to significant historical sites overseas.
181. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards of achievement have improved, as has the quality of teaching. Monitoring of teaching and learning, however, is still underdeveloped.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in sociology are improving because of very good teaching.
- Students are enthusiastic about their lessons and therefore achieve well.
- The subject is well led with a strong focus on improvement.
- There is scope to provide more opportunities for students to develop their speaking skills so that they are more confident in formal discussions.

Commentary

182. Standards at A-level in 2003 were well below the national average. However, until last year, sociology was provided in a distance-learning course and the numbers involved were small. The subject is now taught as a mainstream subject.
183. Currently, standards in Year 13 are average, but are improving because of very good teaching and the positive attitudes of students. Achievement is good. Students build well on what they have learnt in Year 12 and are developing a clear understanding of different theoretical traditions. They are beginning to apply a range of theoretical concepts to unfamiliar situations. Standards in Year 12 are below average, but students have made a good start to the course. Their achievement is good because, although they have not previously studied this subject, they have already made clear and rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding.
184. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are challenging and carefully planned. Students are encouraged to become independent learners within a very supportive framework. Teaching is very enthusiastic and good-humoured. Students react positively to this and show very good levels of concentration and perseverance. As a result, students show enthusiasm for the subject. Sociology is an increasingly popular

option for both boys and girls and it recruits a wide range of ability in line with its inclusive ethos. Although most students are keen to engage in discussion, their language tends to be rather informal and there is scope to provide more opportunities for them to develop greater expertise in speaking more formally and at greater length.

185. Curriculum leadership and management are good. The recently appointed head of department shows a clear sense of purpose and direction. She has made a good start towards introducing this new subject. Schemes of work and other documentation are thorough and supportive. The specialist sociology classroom provides a very positive ethos for learning.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good overall.
- Students are very committed learners.

Commentary

186. Results overall are above average. In the A-level and AS level in 2003 and 2004, 90 per cent or more of the students who took the examination gained A to E grades. At A-level this pass rate closely approached the national average, while at AS level it exceeded it. Results at grades A to E are well above the level of other subjects in the sixth form. In 2003 and 2004 the percentage of students gaining grades A-C at AS level was above the national average. At A-level the percentage gaining grades A-C, having closely approached the national average in 2003, fell further below it in 2004, largely because of factors relating to individual students' circumstances. Differences in the numbers of boys and girls taking the subject make judgements of differences in their relative performance unreliable.
187. In 2004 75 per cent of students achieved better grades than had been predicted. Inspection evidence supports this picture of very good achievement. Higher and lower attaining students show equal familiarity with key psychological concepts such as statistical reliability and validity. In a Year 12 lesson students confidently used their research into visual illusions to explain how observer expectation affects perception. In a lesson on moral development Year 13 students demonstrated very good skills in reasoning when they criticised research findings on the grounds of gender and cultural bias. They also make good conceptual links, as when a high attaining Year 13 student reported on factors that influence behaviour.
188. Teaching is very good overall. The best teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge, dynamic presentation which captures students' interest, very good classroom strategies which give students experience of learning in different ways and adherence to the very well structured lesson plans. When groups of students are given different learning tasks, they take turns to 'teach' what they have learned to

the whole class. This is a highly effective teaching strategy, as students take great care to master what they are given to do, so that their knowledge and understanding of psychological ideas is greatly enhanced. Students say that they appreciate the marking of their work, as they know how well they are doing as well as what they must do to improve. The teaching of key examination skills such as use of time and the proportion of each lesson devoted to learning in pairs and groups, play a large part in the very good achievement. Another effective feature of the teaching is the use of posters. Students work in groups to create visual representations of psychological ideas or research, which are displayed on the classroom walls. This gives them a cause for pride as well as consolidating their learning. Students are consistent in the positive view they have of the subject, which they see as particularly relevant for them. They particularly like the opportunities for active learning in pairs and groups provided in the participatory style of the teaching. They make significant contributions to lessons and to each other's learning. They respect each other's views and work consistently hard during lessons.

189. Leadership and management are good. The leadership has high aspirations for student achievement and is very committed to the principle that the subject is of value to all students. The subject development plan is good. It envisages increased analysis of student learning so that underachievement can be addressed. The departmental budget is insufficient to maintain and improve standards, particularly of lower attainers, in this increasingly popular subject, if the practical teaching strategies found most effective so far are to continue.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

190. Sixth-form work in graphics and health and social care was sampled and provided evidence of above average attainment and very good achievement. The department has chosen to offer an art option in graphics at AS and A2 levels. This imaginative move has been very successful, students gaining above average results at A-level in graphics and similar above average results in the double award GCSE, VCE health and social care course. The development of sixth-form courses is a major improvement in the work of the department since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Students display a high level of interest in the subject.
- The curriculum provides a good extension of work in Years 10 and 11.
- The accommodation is unsuitable for large-scale advanced level work.

Commentary

191. The present group comprises six students who are at the AS stage of the advanced level art syllabus. This is the first group to embark upon an A-level art course in

recent years within the art department, although the art A-level graphics option has been taken by students studying design and technology.

192. The syllabus is for the development of individual interests within the creative arts area and to pursue these independently to a high level. Present students display a range of interests. Attitudes are positive, but students have thus far failed to develop the degree of independence and creative authority appropriate to work at this level. Much of the work seen in class and work scrutiny shows promise but, in many cases, is left unresolved. Basic skills in drawing and in the use of colour are apparent but have not moved on sufficiently from the earlier stage. Progress is sustained by committed teaching and sensitive individual tuition but achievement is no more than satisfactory over the relatively short period covered from the start of the course. Complementary studies are compiled effectively as a source for creative work and ICT is used in research but their impact upon creative work has been limited.
193. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teaching is founded upon good specialist knowledge and a high level of teacher commitment. Its impact is satisfactory, but so far the appropriate formula for promoting better progress at this stage has proved elusive. The teachers' efforts are also hampered by poor accommodation. Sixth-form work is done on a small landing or mezzanine floor with limited space and subject to noise distraction from the studio below. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a clear vision and sense of purpose. The foundations for development have been laid in this reintroduction of sixth-form art.

Media studies

Provision for media studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The students' practical work is of a high standard.
- There are good opportunities for students to contribute their own ideas in the lessons.
- Teachers give very good quality support and advice to individuals contributing to good achievement.
- Students are committed and enthusiastic.
- The accommodation is very limited.

Commentary

194. In 2004, eight students were entered for A-level media studies. All passed the examination, five with grades A-C. At AS level, six students achieved A-C with one of the ten students entered being ungraded. In work seen during the inspection, standards were above average and achievement good. Students have good knowledge and understanding of key concepts and can apply them effectively when analysing media texts. Standards of practical production work are high, particularly with respect to video and digital photography. Students maintain well-researched production logs. They work well together in planning, filming and editing imaginative and skilfully made productions, for example in advanced production work producing title sequences for a crime series. This made good use of the local environment and of collaboration with other partners in the use of Swanley's editing suite.

195. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers know their students well and expect high standards. They have developed a scheme of work appropriate to the course requirements, supported by an appropriate range of resources. The teaching team is small and co-operates well, sharing subject expertise. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and their good specialist knowledge result in lively and imaginative lessons. A study of the concept of the hero in film was developed well in a Year 12 lesson. Students showed good grasp of specialist terms and they were encouraged to develop their own ideas, analysing the key elements. Student progress is monitored closely and good quality feedback ensures that they know how to improve their standard.
196. Students have access to sufficient resources to enable them to achieve high standards in both theoretical and practical work. The range of practical activities is limited by the size of the media room, which is very small though teachers make imaginative use of the available space. The classroom has a clear sense of identity and displays a good range of students' work as well as accommodating video and TV. Computers are available nearby for work with digital photography.
197. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is an appropriate scheme of work supported by an appropriate range of resources. Overall, a positive ethos, with high expectations of students' achievement has been established.

BUSINESS STUDIES AND ECONOMICS

BUSINESS STUDIES

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Current standards are above average.
- Key business concepts are developed and applied to problems in real organisations.
- Students are highly motivated to learn and apply themselves well.
- There is a lack of specialist accommodation and resources.
- Assessment is underdeveloped.

Commentary

198. The A-level results in 2003 and 2004 were below the national average with no students attaining the higher A-B grades. Completion rates for 2003 were also poor. However, these results occurred during the long-term absence of the head of department.
199. Current standards are above average and achievement is good. An excellent lesson developed students' understanding of complex concepts in a relevant and up-to-date context. Students read and discussed a newspaper article about HSBC's attempt to buy Korea First Bank. Skills of analysis and evaluation were well developed as students discussed HSBC's proposals. Very good progress was made with difficult concepts, for example the use of shareholders' ratios in investment decisions and the price earnings ratio. Students also developed the key skill of numeracy. Written work showed good progress was being made by students of all levels of attainment.

200. Teaching is good overall, based on secure subject knowledge and good planning. Teacher/student relationships are excellent and provide a good basis for learning. Students receive very good individual support and their learning is good. However, they do not always receive sufficient feedback to know how to improve the standard of their work. Not all students had a clear understanding of their levels of attainment or of target grades.
201. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. However, the schemes of work do not extend much beyond the examination specification and the department action plan is basic. Assessment is used to monitor progress, but it does not inform curricular planning. Resources are limited in range. There was no evidence of up-to-date journals or business publications. There is a need for more careful monitoring of the department's work to disseminate best practice. Progress made since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Economics

Provision in economics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching ensures that complex economic concepts are taught and applied in up-to-date and relevant contexts.
- Students are highly motivated to learn and apply themselves well.
- More specialist resources are needed.

Commentary

202. Examination results in 2003 were below national averages. However, the 2004 results show promising improvement with some students attaining the highest grades.
203. Current standards are above average. A-level students make good progress and achieve well. A Year 12 class studying the housing market developed good knowledge and understanding of interest rates and the impact of the housing boom on the macroeconomy. The approach was up to date and relevant and clearly motivating. A good range of teaching strategies including teacher input, questioning, group work and written work was used. Homework extended the class work. Students' written work showed very good knowledge and understanding of concepts such as equilibrium of supply and demand and the elasticity of demand. Students developed their application of number including the skilled use of data. In students' written work economic theory was clearly developed in a range of relevant contexts, for example elasticity of demand was exemplified through the price of drugs. The economics after school club is developing financial literacy for a range of students. Such approaches encourage other students to study economics.
204. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are carefully planned with clear objectives set at the beginning. Teachers' expert subject knowledge underpins discussion and ensures that complex concepts are clearly explained. Teacher/student relationships are excellent and provide a good basis for learning. Students receive very good individual support. However, the use of ICT is not fully exploited in modelling economic theory.
205. Leadership and management are good. The department action plan is detailed and thorough. Assessment is used to monitor students' progress. Resources are limited in range; there was no evidence of up-to-date economic journals for example. Individual teachers used recent press articles, however.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement**Sixth form
grade****School
grade**

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is		1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3

Overall standards achieved		3
Pupils' achievement	3	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	4	3
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2

The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
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		2
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
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).