ADDENDUM

1. Page 18; para 26 – 3rd sentence to read ‘He keeps himself abreast of developments in education by, for example, attending courses for serving headteachers and working with a number of educational organisations.’

2. Page 26; para 39 – note in brackets at end of final sentence to read ‘(NB boys outnumber girls by about three to one)’.

3. Page 38; para 99 – fifth sentence to read ‘The ratio of computers to students is about average’.

INSPECTION REPORT

ST OLAVE'S AND ST SAVIOUR'S SCHOOL

Orpington

LEA area: Bromley

Unique reference number: 101676

Headmaster: Anthony Jarvis

Reporting inspector: Clare Gillies

Dates of inspection: 4th - 7th February 2002

Inspection number: 191221

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Boys, mixed in the sixth form
School address:	Goddington Lane Orpington Kent
Postcode:	BR6 9SH
Telephone number:	01689 820101
Fax number:	01689 897943
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr M Elvines
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities in the sixth form
20597	Clare Gillies**	Registered inspector	Geography
11414	Ann Bennett	Lay inspector	
13619	Barrie Meech**	Team inspector	Mathematics
5241	Cyndi Millband**	Team inspector	Biology
8552	Wallis Hart	Team inspector	Chemistry Design and technology
20243	David Benstock	Team inspector	Physics
15277	Chris Vidler	Team inspector	Economics
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Computer studies
30297	Gary Spruce	Team inspector	Music
12328	Pat Mitchell	Team inspector	Classical studies
27226	Richard Cribb	Team inspector	History
4351	Jeanne Strickland**	Team inspector	English
31536	Christopher Gill	Team inspector	French

** Members of the inspection team looking at the provision in Years 7 to 11 and the school as a whole.

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Ltd
National Westminster Bank Chambers
Victoria Street
Burnham-on-Sea
TA8 1AN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Olave's is an 11-18 boys' Anglican foundation, voluntary aided grammar school with girls in the sixth form. Selection is totally by ability, so attainment on entry is very high. The school is heavily over subscribed – seven apply for each place. Boys come from over 70 primary and independent junior schools. The school maintains historical links with the diocese and cathedral of Southwark. With 583 boys in Years 7 to 11 and 259 students in the sixth form, it is slightly smaller than average. Boys outnumber girls in the sixth form, which has grown in recent years, by just over three to one. Well below the average percentage of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Over 70 pupils speak English as an additional language, all fluently. About four out of five pupils are white, with small percentages from other ethnic groups. Well below the average percentage of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, two of whom have statements. Pupil turnover is negligible.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Olave's is an extremely successful and effective school which achieves exceptionally high standards. This is because pupils and sixth-form students work very hard and teaching is very good. Leadership and management are very good and, since the last inspection, the headmaster's determined focus on high standards has been a key factor contributing to their improvement each year. The budget is higher than the national average but the school certainly gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- In national tests and examinations in all years, results are very high. During the inspection, the same very high standards of work were seen, combined with outstanding learning and progress in a range of lessons and activities.
- Pupils and students study with considerable maturity. Their determination, sense of responsibility, and hard work contribute significantly to their success.
- Teaching is very good. Many teachers show considerable dedication in their support and guidance for pupils' and students' personal and academic growth.
- The thriving sixth form is a major strength of the school.
- The headmaster's leadership is very good.

What could be improved

- Lesson observations, and reviews of how individual teachers and faculties are doing, are not tightly structured. Thus the very best, exciting, practice is not shared.
- The music schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 do not cover all elements of the National Curriculum, particularly the requirement to consider music from diverse cultures and periods.
- Analysed data are not used fully to evaluate pupils' past and predicted performance and so complement the recently introduced individual pupil monitoring initiative.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION (November 1996)

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The governors have designated a member to work with the special educational needs department and all procedures for child protection are fully in place. The main hall cannot accommodate all pupils so there is still not a daily act of collective worship. Reports include statements about pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) levels. More students are reaching the higher National Curriculum levels in geography, ICT and physical education. The schemes of work in art do, but those in music do not, meet National Curriculum requirements. The school's plans to monitor the curriculum systematically are not fully in place. Several department development plans are still rather general and do not distinguish between essential tasks and initiatives to raise the quality of learning even higher.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16- and 18-year-olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	C
A-levels/AS-levels			A*	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

A* shows that results are in the top five per cent nationally. The school has a well-considered policy not to enter pupils for a large number of GCSE examinations. The similar school (grammar) statistic shown above is calculated on the *total* points score attained; it gives a false impression. If it were calculated on the *average* points score attained it would also be A*.

Years 7 to 9: In the 2001 national tests almost all boys attained Level 7 (two levels above the expected level for their age) in mathematics, 75 per cent did so in science and 63 per cent did so in English. Over 90 boys in mathematics, 33 in science and eleven in English attained 'exceptional performance'. The trend upwards in these test results has been above that seen nationally. The combined average points score attained for these subjects was very high compared with that for grammar schools.

GCSEs: results are very high. The percentage of boys attaining grades A and A* peaked at 78 per cent in 1999 and dropped to 69 per cent in 2001, hence the overall trend of the last five years has been below that seen nationally. Nevertheless, the school has twice been the top state boys' school in the last four years, within the top ten nationally and in 2001 it was twenty-second. The relative position in terms of grammar school is described below the table.

Sixth form: The percentage of A-level A/B grades, 73 per cent in 2001, and the average points score, have gone up every year since 1997. In the last four years the school has been listed in the national press as the seventh best state school in the country, 'One of the big risers' and tenth in the country overall. AS marks allocated show students attained very high standards. Very high 2001 A-level grades were in biology, chemistry, English literature, design and technology, mathematics and AS general studies. Biology, chemistry, English literature and mathematics have attained the most consistently very high results since 1998. In 2001 art and design grades were above average and those in geography were average. In all other subjects results were well above average.

In Years 7 to 13 standards seen during the inspection were very high overall. Boys make very rapid progress and achieve exceptionally well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils and students work hard and are interested, enthusiastic and determined to do their best. They know, and appreciate, that they are privileged to receive such a high quality of education. Many join in musical, sporting and other extra-curricular activities enthusiastically.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Behaviour was exemplary in many lessons, particularly in the sixth form. Practically all pupils and students mature into responsible people. The

	extremely few incidents of insensitive behaviour are dealt with promptly and firmly.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Boys and students, whatever their gender, faith or ethnic backgrounds, respect each other and teachers and staff. Relationships in school are particularly good. Students willingly take on responsibility and show considerable initiative organising the Christmas charity week.
Attendance	Far above the national average and in line with the average for grammar schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	**Years 7 – 9**	**Years 10 - 11**	**Years 12 - 13**
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

During the inspection teaching in the main school was at least very good in just over half the lessons observed and excellent in five. It was particularly effective in Years 7 and 11. Teaching is very good in English, mathematics and science; in terms of literacy and numeracy it is excellent. Boys who are exceptionally gifted or talented are encouraged and supported to reach their full potential.

Sixth-form teaching is also very good overall. During the inspection teaching was very good or better in exactly half the lessons seen. It was particularly effective in Year 12, although seven excellent lessons were seen in Year 13 and five in Year 12. The overall quality of teaching is excellent in both classics and design and very good in history, computer studies, mathematics, French and chemistry.

Practically all teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and this undoubtedly contributes to the high quality of learning in many lessons. All pupils and students also work extremely hard and must take a considerable part of the credit for the school's outstanding results.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	**Comment**
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good and particularly so in the sixth form. The curriculum is entirely appropriate for pupils' academic aspirations and aptitudes although they, and several parents, would like to have more opportunities for drama in English lessons and after school. The music curriculum does not fully meet National Curriculum requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Although very small in number, these pupils' needs are addressed sensitively and thoughtfully.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The chaplaincy provides well for the spiritual development of boys and students who wish to participate. Assemblies focus more on strengthening and confirming high moral and social standards – provision for these is very good. The range of cultures and values considered in several subjects is not as wide as it could be.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The school now successfully nurtures a supportive and caring pastoral system which helps boys to cope with adolescence and the pressures of academic work.

Parents have very positive views about the school and support its work well. Attendance at parents' meetings is high.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headmaster and other key staff	Very good. The headmaster, acknowledging the strengths and traditions of the past, is skilfully steering the school forward so that it responds to educational developments in the best way for all pupils. The senior managers, including heads of faculties and subjects, and those with pastoral responsibilities, work hard to support academic rigour within a caring ethos.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. They are fully aware of the school's strengths and keenly involve themselves in plans for the future.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall but lesson observations and reviews of individual teachers and faculties are not tightly structured. The analysis of data is not always used effectively to evaluate boys' past and predicted performance and set them targets.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The higher than average funds, including those from the foundation, are spent wisely. The principle of best value is applied effectively in all areas of financial management. All financial procedures are fully in place.

Teachers are well qualified and experienced. The technicians give a superb service. They, and the support and administration staff, contribute most effectively to the day-to-day running of the school. The accommodation is very good, particularly the new science block and the school is generously resourced.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
• Their son likes school. • Teaching is good. • Their son is making good progress. • Their son is expected to work hard and achieve his best. • The school is well led and managed.	• Fifteen per cent of those who returned the questionnaire do not feel they are kept well informed about how their child is getting on. • A small minority of those who returned the questionnaire would not feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem.

Forty per cent of parents returned the questionnaire and 56 attended the parents' evening. The questionnaire responses were extremely positive – over 95 per cent agreed with the favourable statements on the left. Parents of girls in the sixth form were equally positive. The inspection confirmed parents' positive views. The quality of reports is good and parents receive information five times a year. The school welcomes parents and encourages them to raise any problems or questions. The inspection team wonders whether a few parents find the school's plain entrance, and some events and occasions that they attend, rather too formal.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM ST OLAVE'S AND ST SAVIOUR'S SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

This mixed sixth form, with 259 students, is part of a boys' grammar school. It is an Anglican foundation which maintains historical links with the diocese and cathedral of Southwark. Practically all boys move up from Year 11. A few boys, and, since 1998, about 30 girls, enter the sixth form from other schools. Students are expected to have at least six GCSE B grades and A grades in their AS subjects. Attainment at the start of Year 12 is very high. Boys outnumber girls by three to one in Year 12 and four to one in Year 13. The academic curriculum offers the right range of courses for these students. In addition to National Curriculum subjects, Latin, Greek, classical studies and economics are offered for AS- and A-level. The majority of students are white. None are on the register of special educational needs. Several speak English as an additional language – all fluently. Since the increased admissions number in the main school reached Year 12, the sixth form has grown. It is oversubscribed by students wishing to join it from other schools.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is extremely effective. Students receive a high quality of education and attain very high standards. Their confidence, ambition, hard work and enthusiasm to do well, combined with teaching which is very good overall, means that they are very successful. Although spending in the sixth form is quite high, taking into account the most impressive results, it is extremely cost effective.

Strengths

- Standards are very high. The school had one of the country's highest state school percentages of A-level grades A and B in 2001. Students also perform impressively well in a range of non-academic activities.
- Students are extremely positive about life in the sixth form. They work extremely hard, are interested, and contribute much intellectual effort in lessons. Hence their learning and the quality of their contributions to discussions are often excellent.
- Teaching is very good. Many teachers have superb subject knowledge and deliver, with considerable enthusiasm and expertise, excellent, stimulating lessons.

What could be improved

- All teaching is effective but some lessons are more academically challenging, exciting and enjoyable than others. Monitoring of teaching is irregular so the very best, high quality practice that exists is not shared.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment

Mathematics	**Excellent.** Very high standards and exceptional achievement. Very good teaching, high expectations and students' excellent attitudes lead to exceptional performance.
Biology	**Very good**. Very high standards and very good achievement. Students work extremely hard. Teachers are strikingly knowledgeable but lessons are not always imaginative.
Chemistry	**Excellent**. Very high standards and outstanding achievement. Students make rapid progress from Year 12 to Year 13.Teachers have high levels of experience and specialist knowledge. The accommodation and technical resources are excellent.
Physics	**Good**. Well above average standards and good achievement (a few students could achieve even more). Teaching and learning are good. It effectively broadens and deepens learning.
Design	**Very good**. An increasingly popular subject in which standards are very high and achievement is outstanding. Teaching and learning are excellent. The range of technologies is wide and computers play an increasingly important role. Further upgrading of computer-aided design and manufacture hardware and software is required.
Economics	**Very good**. Very high standards and very good learning and achievement. Teachers are very enthusiastic and teaching is good. Economics has become the second most popular A-level. A wider range of teaching and learning styles could be used.
Computer science	**Very good**. High standards. Rapid progress and high achievement. Teaching and learning are very good. The quality of students' coursework is impressive and related to real business needs.
Music	**Good** overall. It is particularly good for students, such as keyboard players and singers with traditional musical skills, but there is no provision for students with interests and skills in technology and contemporary music. Standards are above average and students achieve well. Good teaching and learning. Very good instrumental teaching and extra-curricular groups.
Classical studies	**Excellent.** Very high standards and outstanding achievement. Excellent teaching and learning. The breadth of topics covered is impressive and the pace of lessons fast.
Geography	**Good**. High quality, worthwhile fieldwork. Standards are above average and students achieve well. Good teaching and learning. Occasionally too much repetition of material covered at GCSE, so some topics are not studied in enough depth.
History	**Very good.** Well above average standards and very good achievement. Teaching is very good. Plenty of opportunity to develop students' own interests through coursework. Students learn exceptionally well. Too little use of ICT.
English	**Very good**. Very high standards and achievement. Good teaching. Firm literature tradition of take-up and success. Popular subject.
French	**Very good**. Standards have remained very high and achievement is very good. Teaching is a strength, as is students' effort – they learn exceptionally well. The majority produces excellent written work and speaks fluently. The very good performance of the more self-assured students occasionally inhibits that

	of the others.

Year 12 art students were observed working thoughtfully on their individual projects. A-level results in 2001 were only just above average. Teaching in Latin and Greek is inspirational and standards are extremely high. A few Year 13 students are studying Japanese for a Cambridge certificate. Standards in German are very high.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Students, including those new to the school, follow an excellent induction course and settle quickly to work and sixth-form life. They feel well supported and find teachers most helpful and accessible. Careers guidance has improved since the last academic year. All the necessary information is available and students are given helpful advice about their university applications. They do not discuss the world of work beyond university enough.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. All the tutors and the head of sixth form nurture high standards most effectively. They help students to cope well with the pressures of high academic expectations. Senior managers and the governors have a good overview of the strengths and development issues related to the recent growth of the sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
• They were helped to settle well into the sixth form and sixth form work. • They feel they are treated as responsible young adults. • Their work is assessed thoroughly so they can see how to improve it. • Over nine out of ten find teachers accessible to help them if they have difficulties with their work. • They like being in the sixth form and would advise other students to join it.	• One in four perceive that they did not receive constructive advice on what they should do in the sixth form. • Three out of four do not feel they are well advised about what they should do when they leave school. • One in three Year 12 students believe they are not encouraged to study and research topics independently. Only two out of five are confident they could rely on strong and sensitive support and help if they had personal problems.

Over 90 per cent of Year 12 students returned the questionnaire and 52 per cent of Year 13 (80 per cent together). In every case, Year 13 responses were more positive. The inspection confirmed the students' positive views. Advice about sixth-form options is quite thorough and detailed, but it is true that students have little experience of subjects such as classical studies. There are no taster lessons. The school had staffing problems in careers last year, now resolved, and acknowledges this is an area for development. The link between AS choices and possible career openings needs to be explored more. This might make students feel the advice they received in Year 11 was more constructive. By Year 13 students carry out more research and independent study. These are less developed in Year 12 due to the pressure of covering the AS syllabuses. The head and assistant head of sixth form are more than willing to offer support if students wish, but they will always advise them where to seek advice outside school, if that is what they want. They do not explain this explicitly enough to all students.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, 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".

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

In national tests and examinations in all years, results are very high. During the inspection, the same standards were seen, combined with outstanding learning and progress in a range of lessons and activities.

1. The headmaster rightly described the 2001 Year 9 national test results as 'outstanding', particularly in mathematics and science. Almost all boys attained Level 7 (two levels above the expected level for their age) in mathematics, 75 per cent did so in science and 63 per cent did so in English. Over 90 boys in mathematics, 33 in science and eleven in English attained 'exceptional performance'. The upward trend in these test results has been above that seen nationally. The combined average points score attained for these subjects was very high compared with that for grammar schools, particularly in mathematics. The points score for English was above the grammar school average, which is commendable remembering that girls nationally perform better than boys. Standards in all other subjects are very high overall, and in several, such as mathematics, history, design and technology and physical education, they are outstanding.

2. GCSE results are very high. The percentage of boys attaining grades A and A* peaked in 1999, at 78 per cent, and dropped to 67 per cent in 2001, hence the overall trend of the last five years has been below that seen nationally. Nevertheless, the school has twice been the top boys' state school in the last four years, within the top ten nationally and in 2001 it was twenty-second. Despite these very high results, and because comparative data is related to *total* rather than *average* points scores, the school's GCSE results appear to be only average in terms of progress from Year 9, or compared to grammar schools. This is not actually the case. The governors have decided not to enter boys for ten or eleven GCSEs, as they believe it is better for them to enjoy a wide range of other activities, such as sports and music. The points scores for subjects taken indicate that progress is excellent and the school is producing very high results in grammar school terms. Twenty boys attained A* in over half their GCSEs, two did in all nine subjects.

3. What is particularly encouraging is that no subject performs significantly better or worse than others. ICT results in 2001 were disappointing, but particular internal and external coursework factors explain this unusual result. Unusually, but matching the national picture, art and design had few grades A* and A. Over 70 per cent of boys attained grades A* and A in design and technology, French, history and mathematics and over 40 per cent attained A* grades in design and technology and German. The school strives to raise the percentage of the highest grades in all subjects.

4. Work seen during the inspection was as impressive as the 2001 results. Boys read extremely well and they speak clearly and confidently. However, in a Year 8 English lesson, some boys just read the talks they had prepared, rather than delivering them

confidently and spontaneously from their notes. The latter was much more interesting and effective. Boys in GCSE classes have a very good understanding of character and motivation in Shakespeare plays. By Year 9 boys speak French well, with good understanding and response to questions. In mathematics, Year 7 boys use data competently, for example to plot a graph of force against extension. They also have an excellent command of percentage, decimals and fractions, working at least at Level 7. In Year 10, pupils, already capable of attaining GCSE grade A, made exceptional progress mastering algebra and calculus. Boys are very successful in the National Mathematics Challenges.

5. In science, Year 8 boys are well able to explain chemical reactions in terms of reactants and product. They use terms correctly and understand them fully, for example neutralisation and denature. Year 9 pupils displayed high levels of understanding about time-distance data when they used them to solve a murder mystery. By Year 10 boys use formulae most competently in chemistry. They make rapid progress in mastering new material, such as using the periodic table to work out formula mass.

6. High standards were seen in several physical education lessons. Year 7 handled the ball very well in basketball and Year 8 displayed some excellent racquet skills in squash. In personal and social education (PSE) lessons, evidence of boys' native wit and good general knowledge was apparent. Year 10 pupils used several terms correctly with a high degree of sophistication when discussing broad economic concepts. In art, several Year 11 boys compared paintings by Gainsborough and Hockney skilfully. In design and technology pupils displayed high level practical skills, particularly in Year 7 where they brazed, used a metal drill and moulded plastic.

7. Boys play keyboards very well in music. Even those who are not studying an instrument manage to play simple triads by Year 8. More talented boys compose their own tunes on top of set chords and notate and read music very well. By Year 9 many use the correct keyboard fingering and a few show they have improvisation skills. The standard of instrumental playing is outstanding. Extra-curricular groups include orchestras, wind bands, jazz bands, choirs and string and recorder groups. The repertoire they perform is often very demanding. Recent concerts have included performances of Britten's 'Ceremony of Carols', Wagner's 'Mastersingers' overture and Bach's concerto for two violins. In the rehearsal for the senior orchestra during the inspection, the quality of the string players was just as good as the wind players. It is often the opposite in school groups. Individuals and ensembles win major awards at several London music festivals.

8. Inspectors' scrutiny of written work also confirms boys' high levels of attainment. For example, in geography, sophisticated balancing of different views and frequent use of high level vocabulary, such as jeopardise, in Year 8. Design and technology books include good perspective drawing in Year 7 and realistic notes about the techniques used. Two Year 11 pupils won Arkwright scholarships for design and technology. Presentation of mathematics work, particularly by those with exceptional ability, is remarkably good.

9. English books show very good creative writing skills and comprehension of difficult texts, and the quality of their class discussions is even higher than their writing. The volume of writing in English and history is impressive, and pupils do not use too many worksheets. The very high quality of science work in Year 11's books was noticeably more challenging in chemistry and physics than in biology. ICT GCSE coursework

contains some very good work on website designs, some linked with music or access software.

10. Pupils achieve much success in a range of activities outside the classroom. The chess club is very popular with boys of all ages, the senior and under-16s are Kent county champions and the under-14 team won the Visitors trophy at a major tournament in Birmingham. Eton Fives players reached the final stages of the national championships. The under-14 and under-13 basketball teams reached the semi-finals in the county competition. Several Year 8 boys performed extremely well in athletics and two Year 11 boys represented Kent in the English Schools Championships. Young boys also had success at a national level in rugby fives. Treble choristers sing at The Queen's Chapel of the Savoy and performed Britten's War Requiem at the Fairfield Halls. Each year four or five trebles join the Savoy Choir and sing services at the Savoy Chapel each week and carol services in December. Teams performed well in the Geographical Association's Worldwise Quiz, the Science Race sponsored by the Engineering Research Council and the National Bar mock trials.

Pupils study with considerable maturity. Their determination, sense of responsibility, and hard work contribute significantly to their success.

11. In stimulating lessons, boys' enthusiasm to do well is obvious. They may be competitive, but most teachers tactfully use this to encourage excellence for each individual. Whenever inspectors engaged boys in discussion, they were invariably impressed with how articulate and confident they were. In several lessons it was the boys' enquiring questions that raised the level of stimulation, if the teacher tended to tell rather than intrigue them. During the inspection there were many occasions when boys' own interest, hard work and ability contributed to the success of lessons. Examination of their books also revealed how responsibly they tackle school work. The following is a selection of examples:

    - in history boys tackle tasks confidently, seen when they wrote a persuasive speech, either for or against the reign of King John being viewed as a good or bad thing for the country. They did not refer to textbooks or notes because they concentrated so hard that they had absorbed enough information and ideas;
    - in science boys use equipment sensibly and so teachers leave them to explore new items of equipment, for example the cathode ray oscilloscope;
    - in design and technology Year 7 boys quickly master how to use equipment such as pillar drills, fretsaws and sanding machines safely. By Year 11 they adapt their working procedures very sensibly as they create and manufacture their exciting artefacts;
    - many boys read widely and tackle books written for pupils two or three years older. They summarise and judge books sensibly. They look up words quickly, which speeds up classical and modern language lessons;
    - a significant number of boys has such a natural aptitude for mathematics and they appear to tackle advanced calculations almost casually. This was noted when Year 11 boys worked on quadratic graphs and inequalities, and when Year 9 boys tackled factorisation. Boys' mathematical skills serve them well in many other lessons and they apply them effortlessly. They solve scientific calculations speedily without calculators and draw scatter graphs in geography confidently;
    - boys answer questions eagerly in French, and sensibly ask for help if they do not understand a word;

- in Latin boys recall grammar particularly well from earlier lessons and particularly enjoy working out English words derived from the language.

12. Boys' enthusiasm for games and sport cannot be faulted. Year 8 were seen joining in a warm up session and running three times round a challenging circuit with energy and determination. Some Year 11 boys are extremely able sportsmen, a few are strong swimmers, others play squash and tennis well. Notable successes have been described in paragraph 10.

13. Boys' willingness to share ideas and to help one another is also a significant factor in their learning. A very competent swimmer in Year 7 demonstrated correct strokes effectively. Year 8 pupils shared problems and gave each other advice as they carefully used craft knives to cut out their moving toys. In music, Year 9 listened extremely attentively to each other's twelve bar blues. In ICT a buzz of discussion by Year 11 boys reflected their interest in modelling and simulation, as they used the school's Intranet with casual confidence. In a Year 10 English lesson, the boys made the most of their interrogation of Romeo and Juliet characters, by offering articulate and creative responses.

14. Boys refer to their own experiences and general knowledge well:

- in a Year 10 PSE lesson they produced some advanced ideas about profit, related to revenue and costs;
- in a Year 8 PSE lesson they showed their very good general knowledge of the dangers of smoking, mostly gleaned from the press, and had a sophisticated understanding of fact, theories and research related to such topics;
- in geography, Year 8 related their study of migration from Mexico to the USA to the issue of asylum seekers and refugees entering the UK;
- boys apply their ICT skills, often acquired at home, competently, seen for example in design and technology where they modelled and communicated their design proposals very well;
- in English they voice and exchange their opinions, and, reflecting on newspaper articles, they willingly contribute their own views;
- boys appreciate the links between society's values and the role of painters and art in public life.

Teaching is very good. Many teachers show considerable dedication in their support and guidance for pupils' personal and academic growth.

15. During the inspection, teaching in Years 7 to 11 was at least very good in over half the lessons observed and excellent in five lessons. It was particularly effective in Years 7 and 11, where it was all at least good. Practically all teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and this undoubtedly contributes to the high quality of learning in many lessons. This is particularly so when teachers give crystal clear explanations about the work that lies ahead, and ask more than just straightforward questions. For example:

- great clarity explaining instructions in Year 7 history and developing answers by further excellent questions, to make boys think more deeply;
- a clear and interesting introduction in Year 10 English which ensured that all knew how to select and bullet point ideas, and refer to statistics, as they crafted and shaped talks;

- clear opening explanations, and oral work going through textbook questions, keep boys on their toes in mathematics. Excellent questioning, relating to proving the angle sum of triangles in Year 7, accompanied by a quote from the Merchant of Venice to stress exactness, stimulated the boys to work at a very high level;
- in Year 9 chemistry, the teacher skilfully brought in the boys' knowledge of biology when considering the humus content of soils;
- in Latin, interesting lateral observations and thoughts, livened up a potentially dry grammar lesson, so that it was most enjoyable and productive. In this particular lesson, two pupils with special educational needs made as fine progress as the others;
- the music teacher offers helpful and apt comments on harmonic and melodic variations;
- in GCSE art, teachers skilfully explain links between past and present artists' techniques;
- the very explicit summary of what had been learned in a Year 8 science lesson pulled together the boys very good progress in relating kinetic theory to their observations about thermal decomposition.

16. With excellent subject knowledge, teachers often extend boys' knowledge beyond the levels expected for their age. This was seen in a GCSE chemistry lesson measuring the oxygen in the atmosphere and in design and technology where close monitoring of boys' work generated very good progress. In ICT teachers prepare Powerpoint presentations which boys access on the network – accompanied by excellent prompts from the teacher: this stimulates excellent discussion. A Year 11 ICT lesson was particularly effective when boys made their own notes from skeleton ones the teacher had prepared on the network.

17. In a most exciting physics lesson, Year 9 boys learned about how ICT can be used to measure speed, because the teacher was expert at using the air track, data logger, laptop, television and light gates. This lesson was tackled by investigating the murder of an important visitor to the Richardson room (where the Ofsted team happened to be based) – boys had to manipulate time-distance data to solve the crime! In mathematics, working through increasingly difficult examples effectively, teachers quickly addressed misunderstandings that emerge. In Year 7, boys made speedy strides learning about the relationship between force applied to a spring, because the teacher did not tell them the whole story but made them think for themselves.

18. The high quality of coaching, particularly excellent in squash and Eton Fives, contributes significantly to the proficient standards boys attain in games and physical education. Physical education teachers join the boys in warm ups and circuit training, which generates a humorous and purposeful atmosphere. In swimming they coach and support confident and less confident boys equally well, through a variety of interesting activities, so that all make good progress. The quality of instrumental teaching is extremely high. During a senior orchestra rehearsal, the visiting instrumental teacher identified important points and illustrated what was required in an amusing but successful manner. The wind band tutor firmly insisted that boys watched the beat, and the performance improved!

19. Many, but by no means all, teachers also use humour and fun to make lessons exciting and enjoyable. There is no straightforward correlation between enjoyment and achievement, and boys work conscientiously whatever the quality of teaching. Nevertheless, the memories they carry with them in the future, will probably be linked to

those lessons where there were stimulating elements. In addition to the unusual physics lesson described in paragraph 17, the following three language lessons had a similar flavour:

- lively and animated French teaching describing cartoon characters in Year 8, so that progress on adjective position and agreement was very good;
- fast, finger-snapping style of delivery in Year 9 German meant that pupils had to concentrate, which they did well;
- boys thoroughly enjoyed comparing Roman comic characters with Dad's Army ones in Latin.

20. Teachers prepare boys extremely well for their GCSE examinations. In a science lesson boys prepared their own self-analysis sheets about a recent test – an excellent way of making them appreciate what they need to know in greater detail. In ICT their coursework folders have excellent front sheets for summaries of teachers' marking. Each assessment area is addressed, with reasons for marks and ideas for improvement. In Year 9, history teachers show boys how to structure essays clearly. Such skills bear fruit in several subjects at GCSE level. Work examined in many subjects shows that boys regularly complete past questions and go through them in detail. In addition, teachers regularly give up their free time to help those with problems and support them with their revision.

21. Those teachers who deliver the PSE course are particularly sensitive to boys' different levels of maturity and ethnic backgrounds. In a lesson on sex education the teacher confidently challenged the boys' laughter when they saw gay teenagers in a video. This potentially difficult topic was managed well, although no element of any moral context was included. In form time, tutors occasionally focus on topics relevant to boys' lives, for example the stealing of mobile telephones leading on to a discussion about appropriate prison terms for different crimes. An excellent session about different types of bullying was skilfully managed by the teacher, who built on the boys' replies to make points about respect for all. The Year 8 class was clearly thoughtful about this issue. Year 7 were enthralled by their tutor's riveting tales about cricket experiences, which culminated in the theme that they must never get too big for their boots. These sessions were warm, humorous and relevant to individuals. The assemblies seen were more formal and school focused.

22. Teachers are also sensitive to the fact that, although the boys have passed an academic test to enter the school, inevitably some of them find work easier than others. Thus Year 8 pupils who find Latin quite difficult are praised when they do well. In another Year 8 group the teacher challenged the gifted pupils with remarks such as 'On University Challenge you'd have to say'. Fast, encouraging comments, such as 'Absolutely right' in Year 7 history, 'Really excellent' in Year 8 geography or 'I only want high quality' in GCSE history, all help to boost boys' confidence. Excellent teaching in mathematics very effectively stimulated both the high attainers and those with exceptional ability. The design and technology teacher shows his respect for boys' work by storing items with great care. Many boys commented on how accessible and helpful they found their teachers, and that they could always ask for extra help if they wanted it.

23. The pastoral care and guidance boys receive are very good. Boys attend an induction evening with their parents in the term before they arrive and the majority of parents attends a social evening in Year 7. The heads and assistant heads of lower (Years 7 to 9) and upper (Years 10 and 11) schools are alert to the need to monitor behaviour and performance by ethnic groups. It is clear that there are no differences. All boys have

equal opportunities to join in games and other activities, and a specific effort is made to be sure that non-squad boys can participate in matches and competitions.

24. The few boys with special educational needs, including those with behavioural problems, receive fine support and make as good progress as others. If any boys appear to be seriously working below expected standards, perhaps not convincingly heading towards predicted GCSE grades, they are placed in a 'supergroup' and given two terms of mentoring. Normally boys have work experience in Year 11, but this did not happen last academic year because of staffing problems in careers. Teachers know most boys' particular skills and aptitudes and develop them well. Several boys spoke of the time and help they had received, from the heads and assistant heads of middle and lower school and/or their form tutors, when they had problems of an academic or non-academic nature.

The thriving sixth form is a major strength of the school.

This is described in Parts D and E.

The headmaster's leadership is very good.

25. The headmaster, acknowledging the strengths and traditions of the past, is skilfully steering the school forward so that it responds to educational developments in the best way for all pupils and students. Senior managers, including heads of faculties and subjects, and those with pastoral responsibilities, work hard to support the headmaster's focus on academic rigour within a caring ethos. The headmaster had been in post for two years at the time of the last inspection. The report noted evidence of 'positive changes to staffing, curriculum and aspects of management that he had initiated'. All these positive changes have been strengthened since then. At the same time examination results have improved considerably and high standards have been maintained in music, sports and extra-curricular activities.

26. The headmaster has encouraged teachers to use all available data, especially on prior attainment, so that individual pupils' progress is measured accurately. Such analysis has underpinned his work to introduce Individual Pupil Monitoring, which is well underway. Performance management was introduced smoothly under the headmaster's direction. He keeps himself abreast of developments in education by, for example, attending courses for serving headteachers and working with the Secondary Heads' Association and the Teacher Training Agency. His vision for the school's development is clearly shared throughout the school. His role in introducing female students into the sixth form and changing the school's ethos is described in paragraph 97.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Lesson observations, and reviews of how individual teachers and faculties are doing, are not tightly structured. Thus the very best, exciting, practice is not shared.

27. Members of the senior management team carry out detailed faculty reviews every three years. When these are written up, the summaries about the quality of teaching are too vague. For example, several different reviews include the phrase: 'All of the lessons observed were felt to be sound and, indeed, most were good or very good'. Targets which emerge from these reviews, are too often about maintenance, rather than specific areas for improvement. For example: 'To complete the revision for the schemes of work' might indirectly lead to better standards in English, but it lacks the meticulous analysis of which skills boys need to develop (maybe analytical writing to match their oral work). This rather bland approach is reflected in the faculty

development plans and performance management objectives for individual teachers – the former are not precise enough and the latter lack insight in terms of professional development.

28. In a few science lessons a variation in pace was noted, with some lessons proceeding too gently for all boys to make rapid progress, or teachers did not pose enough open-ended questions to stimulate high levels of thought. In a few mathematics lessons, higher attainers coasted for minutes in several parts of lessons. As teachers do not regularly observe each other they cannot reflect on their own practice; for example, noting that some boys, because they have grasped a point so quickly, have let their attention wander, or that occasionally lessons end without enough time for a thorough summary of what has been studied, noted in a Year 11 ICT lesson.

29. Inspection observations revealed that French learning is best when English is hardly spoken at all. With the layout of the art room, some pupils cannot see a screen image or do not jot down important points. Inspectors also noted a correlation between a boy's lack of concentration and sitting with his back to the teacher. Observation of lessons where boys spent too long on one activity, such as choropleth shading of a map in geography, suggests why standards could be even higher.

30. Lesson observations also reveal areas of the school where the walls are drab and depressing. A few English rooms have almost bare walls, the music room is not attractive and the large relief maps displayed in geography do not inspire – boys are not bombarded with exciting satellite images, aerial photographs, their own work and ICT generated materials. The school's faculty reviews have not picked up on these elements.

31. Faculty reviews occasionally involve taking in boys' books for consideration. This is not done rigorously enough. For example, a Year 11 science book had not been marked since September, and the quality of work in several books suggested it had not been checked carefully. Boys do not redo poor work. The presentation of graphs ranges from poor to excellent. Several boys could not instantly describe the differences between climate graphs they had drawn, because they had used different vertical scales.

The music schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 do not cover all elements of the National Curriculum, particularly the requirement to consider music from diverse cultures and periods.

32. The music curriculum for Years 7 to 9 does not take account of revisions to the National Curriculum that were introduced in September 2000. The musical repertoire boys experience fails to meet the breadth of study required, to include: 'a range of music from different times and cultures'. There are passing reference to jazz and some folk music, but overall there are too few references in the schemes of work to popular or non-western music. Boys have very limited opportunities to work with music technology 'to create, manipulate and refine sounds'.

33. The study of musical instruments or periods of musical history is emphasised at the expense of the core activities of performing, composing and appraising. Thus, little account is taken of the National Curriculum requirement that: 'Teaching should ensure that listening and applying knowledge and understanding are developed *through* the interrelated skills of performing, composing and appraising'. The schemes of work show little connection between one topic and the next. Composing in particular is peripheral. In Year 8 it fails to appear until the spring term. The build-up of skills and

knowledge is not planned for, resulting in some Year 8 tasks being easier than similar ones done in Year 7.

34. In the last inspection report, music and art schemes of work did not meet National Curriculum requirements. The art ones now do, although they do not describe any particular teaching strategies for the different elements of the course. Neither do they record how work should be adapted to match boys' different aptitudes for the subject. Talented boys are not given challenging tasks and do not reach high levels at the end of Year 9. In 2000 and 2001 art GCSE results were significantly lower than those in other subjects, the latter a reflection of the national picture.

Analysed data are not used fully to evaluate pupils' past and predicted performance and so complement the recently introduced Individual Pupil Monitoring initiative.

35. The school introduced formal testing of Year 7 boys' verbal and non-verbal reasoning in September 1999. Evaluation of the difference between performance in these tests and national ones taken by the same pupils at the end of primary school, highlights where boys have particular aptitudes or talents. The school also has the entrance test results as a baseline for attainment. It has started to use these data to set even more challenging targets for Year 9 and GCSE, but has not fully refined the process. Not all teachers are using the predicted National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades to be sure that as many boys as possible attain the highest levels at the end of Year 9, and that those who attain grades B and C at GCSE have attained their full potential.

36. In September 2002 the school will introduce Individual Pupil Monitoring for all boys. With their parents, boys will come into school to discuss progress and individual targets. The trial day for Year 10 boys, in January 2002, went well. One parent was delighted that her son had been given a practical target, to speed up and make his writing clearer, as this would help him to keep up in class. Another commented that: 'with very high performance at the end of Year 9, and A* grades predicted for GCSE, why was a target needed'? The one chosen, to read more widely around topics, was accepted – this is what will prepare such boys well for sixth-form work.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

37. In order to maintain and improve the already very high standards, the governors and senior management should:

    (1) introduce regular, tightly structured and systematic faculty reviews, which include rigorous lesson observations. Share the very best, effective and exciting teaching practice; (paragraphs 27-31)

    (2) rewrite the music schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 so they fully meet National Curriculum requirements; (paragraphs 32 and 33)

    (3) persevere with the introduction of Individual Pupil Monitoring and incorporate into it statistical evaluation of pupils' predicted performance. (paragraphs 35 and 36)

Sixth form

In the light of the first and third key issue above, particularly focus on the academic rigour, excitement and enjoyment of sixth-form lessons. (paragraphs 70,71 and 93)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 to 11	45
	Sixth form	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 to 11							
Number	5	19	16	5	0	0	0
Percentage	11	42	36	11	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	12	21	19	14	0	0	0
Percentage	18	32	29	21	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages as each lesson represents just over two percentage points in Years 7 to 11 and 1.5 percentage points in the sixth form

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 to Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	583	259
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9	N/A

Special educational needs	Y7 to Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	10	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	74

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	116	0	116

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	115	116	116
	Girls			
	Total	115	116	116
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (99)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	98 (95)	100 (100)	98 (98)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	116	116	116
	Girls			
	Total	116	116	116
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	95 (97)	100 (100)	91 (95)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	101		101

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	101	101	101
	Girls			
	Total	101	101	101
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	60
	National	38.4

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	102	29	131

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	102	29	131
	Average point score per candidate	28	25.1	27.4
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	102	29	131	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Average point score per candidate	28	25.1	27.4	n/a	n/a	n/a
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	10
Black – other	2
Indian	50
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	27
White	614
Any other minority ethnic group	21

Not all pupils included as some parents did not wish their children to be classified.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	12	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 to Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	49.28
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

Education support staff: Y7 to Y13

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	278

Deployment of teachers: Y7 to Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.3

Average teaching group size: Y7 to Y11

Key Stage 3	27.4
Key Stage 4	22.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001

	£
Total income	2,590,052
Total expenditure	2,594,049
Expenditure per pupil	3,103
Balance brought forward from previous year	156,670
Balance carried forward to next year	152,673

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	842
Number of questionnaires returned	340

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	42	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	44	2	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	51	4	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	53	11	1	1
The teaching is good.	45	52	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	41	13	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	42	5	1	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	23	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	28	52	15	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	56	40	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	44	4	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	41	10	1	2

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

RESULTS AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

38. It is most impressive that the percentage of A-level A/B grades has gone up every year since 1997 when it was 60.3, to 2001 when it was 73. Over the same period the average points score has also increased steadily, from 23.3 to 26. For the last few years the school has set itself challenging targets and exceeded them. It is not surprising therefore that the Daily Telegraph listed the school as the seventh best state school in the country and the Sunday Times described it as 'One of the big risers' and tenth in the country overall.

39. The school has not yet turned its AS marks into final certificated grades, so that boys who wish to improve their percentage marks can do so. Boys have told their teachers the percentages they gained on the papers they took last summer, and these show that they attained very high standards. Students who have been at the school since Year 7 attained the highest points score in 2000 and 2001. Males who joined the school in Year 12 attained lower points scores than female ones in 2001, but the reverse was true in 2000. The average points score for all male students was almost three points above female students in 2001 (NB boys outnumber girls by about ten to one).

40. Individual subjects where students attained very high A-level grades in 2001 were biology, chemistry, English literature, design and technology, mathematics and AS general studies. Biology, chemistry, English literature and mathematics have had the most consistently very high results over the last few years. In 2001 art and design grades were above average and those in geography were average. In all other subjects results were well above average.

41. During the inspection, the standards of work seen were very high overall and students made first-rate progress in the majority of lessons. They achieve exceptionally well. In terms of the key skill of communication, students' reading, writing and speaking are excellent. Surprisingly, English students' reading aloud, particularly of poetry and Shakespeare, is disappointing, and a poor match for the lively and perceptive response to the lines they usually show in discussion. A similar weakness in Shakespeare reading was noted in the main school. There is clearly a lack of emphasis on improving students' reading and acting skills in earlier years, so that in the sixth form they can give vivid life and meaning to the texts they share in class.

42. Sixth-form students' most effective application of number, another key skill, is a significant feature of their success. Their marked aptitude and interest in mathematics mean most deal competently with complex calculations and formulae when necessary, particularly in the three sciences. Their precision in analysing biological data increases as teachers stress the importance of this skill. In chemistry they calculate solutions efficiently and most refine their existing concepts in the process. Students' very strong mathematical skills support the application of physics' theories to complex problems.

43. AS- and A-level computer studies are becoming more popular and the great majority of all students uses ICT competently, and well enough to support their work in the sixth form. Year 12 AS students develop very good programming skills – some have done so from a young age at home. They test routines by running queries. They have successfully completed theory modules on networking concepts and hardware principles and devices. Year 13 students have a good understanding of basic assembler coding, including the use of branching techniques, and, in an excellent lesson seen, began to develop very good looping techniques in order to modify

programs already written. They are preparing a good variety of coursework projects most of which involve real users outside school.

44. It is striking how well students present much of their work. It is extremely well presented in mathematics, and students record essential information clearly, which helps their revision. Biology students make succinct notes and detailed analyses of experimental results, though their notes suggest they do not read widely enough around topics. Occasionally, basic details, such as naming units and using the correct technological language, are missed and brief answers lead to misconceptions. Chemistry students collect valid and reliable data and prepare revision notes in a logical sequence. A few do not evaluate some of the methods they use critically enough. In classical studies students approach their work with maturity, and handle very large amounts of literary and historical information confidently. Their essays and notes are well organised and thorough. The best essays and course work in history are impressive and above A-level standard, reflecting students' independent work at home and the clear notes they write on source reading. Economic students' files are well ordered and extremely comprehensive.

45. In mathematics, the majority of students manipulates equations and inequalities confidently, with just the occasional lapse in work with brackets and fractions. A few Year 12 students are less skilled in manipulating algebraic relationships on trigonometric identities, but by Year 13 they do this very well. All are confident with differentiation and integration and sketching graphs of functions. They produce good work in mechanics on centre of gravity, moments and projectiles and have a good command of the basic theory. However, there is little evidence of their ICT skills being exploited to extend their understanding of mathematics.

46. In biology, most Year 12 students learn well to distinguish fact and opinion, use evidence, and choose relevant information in support of their ideas. Just occasionally the intellectual rigour needed to apply ideas is less strong and students' explanations are superficial, for instance when dealing with the biochemistry of respiration. Physics students' investigation skills are less well developed – a significant number lack deep understanding of experimental reliability and evaluation of error. This is because they spend a limited time practising and developing these skills.

47. Year 12 chemistry students draw, analyse and compare three-dimensional models and formulae of substances most effectively. They have a very good understanding of important chemical changes and apply chemistry concepts to areas such as agriculture and medicine adeptly. They remember important concepts because they learned them well in the past. In physics, students apply their initiative and considerable intelligence to understand complex ideas, so they grasp concepts quickly and apply them successfully to challenging problems. They work independently and also share ideas with great maturity.

48. Students enjoy their study of literary texts in English and their essays show developing skill and confidence in critical interpretation and analysis. Some very high quality writing was seen in both years. Students work hard to achieve high standards without losing their lively individual approach and pleasure in the books they study. A well-directed class exploration of Browning's 'My Last Duchess' elicited some perceptive and illuminating comments from students, who made intelligent links with other poems and periods.

49. Year 12 French students use a variety of tenses and complex sentences very well, at a standard that is already considerably beyond GCSE. In Year 13 their written work is

usually at a higher than A grade standard. In both years most students speak French confidently, fluently and accurately and discuss complex intellectual issues. In classical studies, students' knowledge and use of specialized language are very good. Their understanding of the nuances of political power in Roman politics, for example at the time of Tiberius, is mature.

50. In geography, students are good at seeing the links between physical and human processes and, when appropriate, they use their field trip work very well to exemplify important points. Their individual research skills are not well developed as they do not use the Internet regularly and tend to rely too much on textbooks. A few of them find the advanced concepts involved in plate tectonics and meteorology quite difficult as they have not studied them before. Students' analytical and evaluative skills in history are of a very high standard; they skilfully develop their own viewpoints and cite relevant data to support them. They draw on, use confidently, and evaluate a wide range of primary and secondary sources and present detailed and complex arguments about historical motive and interpretation.

51. Year 12 design students work most successfully on useful products, including disposable spoons, music stands and chairs to reduce injury to those who sit for a long time in front of computers. They research existing products and needs, with focus and speed. They use both conventional and electronic methods to prepare an excellent range of design ideas; their final products are excellent. Year 13 students' competence is demonstrated by how well they describe and justify the key decisions they have made and how convincingly they present products. They also have a thorough understanding of relevant concepts, for example from physics or human biology.

52. In economics, Year 12 students confidently and skilfully analyse complex relationships, for example the link between interest and exchange rate changes. Almost all Year 13 students evaluate the effectiveness of different economic policies most competently; they apply economic theory to a wide range of contexts and show a sophisticated grasp of contemporary economic and political issues. The few students taking AS music have a good knowledge of technical and musical terms. Many sixth-formers play instruments to a very high standard.

53. Students' achievements are by no means confined to academic ones. This report can only highlight a few particular successes in the last couple of years:
    - the rugby senior team, which toured Alberta in August 2001, won the Kent under- 18 competition;
    - the female captain of the netball team has a full international place for England;
    - the Eton Fives reached the national semi-finals and in the same sport seven female students achieved considerable success, two reaching the quarter-finals of the National Schoolgirls Championships;
    - the senior relay swimming team won bronze in both the freestyle and the medley relay in the county championships;
    - in Bromley the school produced the best Young Enterprise company and top managing director;
    - a science team came fifth in a county competition;
    - the jazz band made a CD and the Barbershop group won a cup at the Bromley Music Festival three years running. The chamber choir won the Festival Shield.

- one student, a member of the National Youth Choir, won a choral scholarship to King's College, Cambridge and another is a member of the National Youth Orchestra.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

54. Students value the strong academic atmosphere and encouragement, both to pursue excellence and to play a full part in the life of the school. They are extremely good role models for younger pupils. They are proud of being part of the school, and know that their achievements, in all areas, will be celebrated. They feel respected as young adults, and appreciate that they are given a lot of responsibility. Their attitudes to school life and their behaviour are excellent.

55. Students' attendance is very high, and they make the most of their day, whether in lessons, private study sessions or extra-curricular activities. They are industrious, although reports show that some Year 12 students are inclined to relax a little after GCSEs. They respond very well to the very practical advice often offered by teachers, who know them well and are unafraid to mention those aspects that are a problem. The imaginative use of analogy in reports helps to crystallise the problem, as for a classics student whose lack of organisational skills were challenged: 'If x had to untie the Gordian knot then the army would still be fighting'.

56. Relationships between students and teachers are excellent. Students appreciate and respect their teachers' excellent subject knowledge and expertise. In the best lessons they feel challenged and delight in arguing a case, justifying their point of view or articulating perceptive judgements. A Year 13 student put it well when saying that he found 'room for sideways thinking' in English lessons. At times, in just a few lessons seen during the inspection, although absorbing the content of the lessons, students are a little too passive, reluctant to ask or to answer questions or to be stretched still further.

57. Students are generous in supporting each other in class, and there is no difference in the quality or quantity of contributions from students of different gender, ethnicity or religion. Students of all faiths attend assembly and feel that even though this is a church school, their faith is respected. Assemblies are very formal and corporate occasions, and do not always give students much space for personal reflection or consideration of the theme. The weekly Eucharist is a valuable occasion, full of reflective opportunities for those who make use of it.

58. Large numbers of students participate in sporting activities and the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Many also take up opportunities offered for trips and excursions organised by the staff. They plan and raise funds for many of these, and know that they will both enjoy and benefit greatly from trips like World Challenge to Nepal. There is a good understanding of the importance of democratic processes. Students apply and compete for the role of prefect, and elect officers for the sixth- form association. In addition to organising their own social events, the association takes responsibility for the annual Christmas festival, which raises funds for charity. Over a two-day period events are organised which involve the whole school. Last year's £15,000 was allocated to four charities, local and overseas, with the whole school voting on its allocation. The highlight of all this activity was a record-breaking collection of aluminium cans!

59. Students join teachers to give generously of their time organising clubs for younger pupils. The Year 8 chemistry club was particularly enjoyable, with the young pupils'

excitement and self-esteem growing as they made coloured 'volcanoes' and gained a real affection for the subject. They run the debating society during a lunch-hour.

60. The sixth form retains discipline procedures similar to those in the main school and students understand the need to do so. The school makes very clear its expectations of behaviour and its intolerance of bullying, racism and drugs. Detentions, and extremely rarely, exclusions are given. Behaviour overall is excellent, and the few misdemeanours are swiftly dealt with.

61. Sixth formers enjoy their time at St Olave's. They mature socially and intellectually, becoming confident but not arrogant, well able to cope with life beyond school. Students enjoy their studies, and almost all want to continue into higher education. During their sixth-form time they develop the skills needed to pursue their studies and to work independently. Although they have no allocated study area, they use study periods wisely, making good use of the library and taking advantage of the computer provision, newspapers and journals available. They treat their common room areas with respect and are proud of the new kitchen they have financed.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

62. Sixth-form teaching is very good. Over 60 lessons were observed during the inspection and teaching was at least very good in exactly half of them. It was always satisfactory and good in almost four out of five. It was particularly effective in Year 12, although seven excellent lessons were seen in Year 13 and five in Year 12. The overall quality of teaching was excellent in both classics and design and very good in history, computer studies, mathematics, French and chemistry.

63. **One key ingredient in many lessons is the teachers' excellent subject knowledge and expertise**. Biology teachers exploit their strikingly good knowledge to give clear explanations, and to draw out facts from students to build up and structure ideas. This is not done with enough rigour to stimulate the level of intellectual demand for the highest attainers. By presenting the students with excellent male and female role models, chemistry teachers combine excellent subject knowledge and very good management skills. In a Year 12 mathematics lesson, the teacher used practical investigations most effectively to develop a theory. As they applied their research skills, students were reminded of the effectiveness of looking for patterns. The two classics teachers are highly competent and erudite. Their knowledge is authoritative and their enthusiasm infectious.

64. Students greatly value the English teachers' expertise and enthusiasm; several students mentioned the quality of teaching as a factor that had led them to choose the subject. Teachers make good use of their own wider reading to give breadth and context to work on set books. French teaching is often inspired and encourages students to have high expectations. This is particularly effective for Year 13 students who are taught by three different teachers, all of whom have excellent fluency. The design teachers have excellent understanding of the examination requirements and plan, with students, every learning step so that students know exactly what to do to gain more marks. Because of the excellent long-term planning the students progressively gain confidence by using skills and concepts placed in a sequence appropriate for the task.

65. **In the best lessons teachers adapt the style and pace of their lesson well to meet the needs of different students.** Working through examples in mathematics, the individual support from teachers is very effective in meeting students' particular

needs. In a Year 13 lesson on solving trigonometric equations, the teacher used questions very well to summarise previous work before developing the theory and techniques for solution, and then checked each students' progress and understanding as they worked through a set of problems. Year 13 biology students make very good progress widening their experience of practical work when opportunities for them to explore the phenomena themselves are thoroughly planned.

66. During the inspection, the best English lessons were when students sat around a large table, seminar style. When they were sitting in rows facing the teacher good interaction was limited, and there were too many questions and answers between the teacher and individual students. In biology the pace of lessons is invariably brisk and the demands made on students are rigorous. Skilful questioning allows students to discover much information for themselves. Good comparisons are made with the modern world.

67. The computer studies teacher's planning is excellent. An example is the 'assimulator' package he has written especially to support teaching of assembler programs, an additional element to the standard A-level syllabus for high attaining students. In lessons, he frequently challenges individual students to explain routines, so that he is sure everyone understands the concepts.

68. History teachers manage group work and discussions well and their questions are perceptive and open-ended. They encourage students to take an active part in lessons by setting up small groups to analyse documentary sources. Just occasionally activities lack intellectual rigour, for example when project work is discussed in class. In a lesson where the teacher led a discussion on Napoleon III, a few students were not given challenging enough tasks. Design teachers make sure that students learn quickly the need to talk things through and to be prepared when challenged, as they frequently are, to defend the decisions they have made. Year 13's work reveals the excellent continuity and carefully planned, continually challenging sequences that underpin the two-year course.

69. Chemistry teachers show considerable patience, care and sensitivity when they very effectively challenge students to build on prior knowledge and to learn from their earlier mistakes. As a result, students not only understand chemistry concepts well but also appreciate the importance of evaluating their own study methods. Planning in physics is satisfactory but too few activities are planned for the full range of attainment, so the relatively lower attaining students are not always supported enough to fully understand new material. In history lessons objectives are clear and planned to develop students' skills and interest. Students' individual needs, especially the few who the teacher acknowledges are underachieving, are not always focused on enough. Teachers use videos and tapes but some of them need to be upgraded, particularly the 1960s tapes. When teaching is particularly effective, French teachers make very good use of materials that support progression from GCSE to A-level, and a variety of activities and learning styles are included in a single lesson. Less effective teaching does not allow all students to take an active part. All of the excellent development and achievement in design is based upon the excellent quality of the one-to-one support.

70. **Students are most perceptive about the different styles of teaching they experience, and particularly remember lessons that are fun and enjoyable.** In a sixth-form questionnaire completed in November 2001, only 40 per cent of students said they found lessons intellectually stimulating. Even if teaching is unimaginative, their natural ability and determination means the majority learn enough to attain very high grades. In a Year 12 biology class they enjoyed spirited, relevant banter; batting ideas to each other in a happy atmosphere, so much learning took place. Very good biology

teaching is imaginative and enthusiastic and has ambitiously high expectations of what students can achieve. However, occasionally certain aspects of biology teaching hinder learning; dull planning, a pace which tends to slow down as lessons proceed – cutting down on challenge – and omission of constructive summaries at the end of lessons. In many chemistry lessons, the teachers' excellent presentation skills, obvious enthusiasm for the subject, and lively interactions tinged with humour, mean students particularly enjoy these lessons.

71. When physics teaching is very good, teachers develop students' knowledge in a lively, inspirational way, so they respond enthusiastically and learn very effectively. Students are confident and encouraged by the helpful, friendly and supportive atmosphere that pervades several geography lessons. In classical studies storytelling is not neglected and students appreciate humorous touches. Just occasionally the teacher's exposition is rather long, but usually some small variation is introduced in time, such as a firsthand study of an ancient writer's opinion on the topic. Economics teaching is always enthusiastic. Students respond by confidently asking questions to confirm their understanding. This was seen in a lesson where they probed the relationships between investment and key variables. Teachers provide clear explanations of complex theory and give students very useful handouts summarising key points. These also provide helpful models of how students can organise their own notes.

72. **Most teachers are diligent about marking students' work regularly and helpfully.** Marking is consistent and constructive in biology; the best clearly tells students how well they are progressing, gives them 'cause for thought' and checks they respond to comments. Physics teachers set constructive homework and their regular marking informs students clearly how well they are learning. The assessment of work is a particular strength in English and some exemplary marking was seen. The exceptionally thorough marking of their work and the clear indications about how to improve, help classics students. Economics teachers set tests regularly and mark work with helpful suggestions about where improvements could be made. Assessment procedures in history are good, leaving most students in no doubt about how to improve their work at every stage, and engendering high expectations. The regular practice in geography of setting past examination questions is very helpful, especially when students discuss the official mark schemes critically. Frequent homework is given in computer studies, to test theory and develop coursework projects, and it is assessed regularly and constructively.

73. **In many lessons students work to their full potential and advance their knowledge and understanding because they contribute much effort and energy.** In most subjects students accept that they are partly responsible if they do not achieve as well as they could. They learn exceptionally fast and well in classics because they are self-motivated. They assume increasing responsibility for their own learning and are quick to make useful links between the literature, the culture and the history of the ancient world. Their general recall is very good and most are academically ambitious.

74. History students work very hard and take responsibility for their learning by researching topics and using historical methods of analysis effectively to assess the influence that individuals have on the period they are studying. They know that history gives them an excellent basis on which to build a variety of careers, and appreciate how it supports their research skills and aspirations to study, for example law or archaeology, at university. Year 12 design students evaluate each other's work and share ideas and thus most effectively sharpen the focus of their own work. On numerous occasions economics students commented on how much they appreciate and value the relevance of this subject: 'It means that I understand economic reporting on the news

more easily than those students who take other subjects'. Students concentrate hard in chemistry lessons and, by participating well, they hone their understanding before successfully embarking on the next task.

75. In physics not all students participate actively and, whilst they absorb and acquire knowledge, they do not deepen their learning by asking questions or raising points for clarification often enough. In geography, students do not do enough background reading and Internet research for presentations. Highly fluent students sometimes overshadow the less confident in French, but pair or group work alleviates this problem in the best lessons. There was a surprising lack of interaction in a few English lessons. Students often delivered their prepared material to the teacher and seldom questioned or challenged each other. Consequently, their ideas and opinions were not often exposed to the cut and thrust of argument, though the quality of their writing shows that they have much to give and gain in such interchanges. Economics students, especially in Year 13, are not given enough responsibility to undertake research tasks, prepare papers and lead seminar style sessions and thus be even better prepared for university studies and beyond.

76. It is clear that students use ICT for research in history but not enough in lessons. In geography they do not receive enough guidance about good websites to access. More use of the Internet could be made in economics too, although teachers make sure that examples and applications of economic concepts are relevant and up to date. ICT should be developed so that students are fully prepared for university work, and for careers where they are likely to need to access up-to-date information regularly.

CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

77. Eighteen AS- and A-level options are available. Two subjects, economics and classical studies, are not offered in the main school and further mathematics is another option. Most subject combinations are possible. Physical education AS was introduced in Year 12 in September 2000. Mathematics is the most popular subject –over 70 students are taking A-level this academic year and 90 are taking AS-level. Economics is the second most popular single subject, although many students study the sciences, with a significant number taking two or three of them. An increasing number of students are choosing computer studies. This academic curriculum is entirely appropriate for the students. The quality and range of learning opportunities for students are very good. History is more popular than geography and, as the majority study French for GCSE, more students study it than German. Design and technology is gaining status and attracting more students but numbers taking it, and art, are relatively low.

78. In response to national guidance, the structure of sixth-form study has changed since the last inspection. Then, A-levels and only four AS subjects were offered. Now students choose four AS-levels in Year 12 and drop one of them in Year 13, though a few manage to take four A-levels. This national initiative has been successfully introduced in the school, and it adds breadth to Year 12 studies. In addition, all Year 12 students follow a general studies course, taught by teachers from a variety of departments, which also leads to an AS qualification.

79. Within the physical education and games programme sixth-form students can choose from an excellent range: rugby; netball; squash; racketball; swimming and water polo; Eton Fives; basketball; volleyball; lifesaving; weight training; golf; hockey; ten-pin bowling; football; cycling; athletics; cricket; tennis and softball. Some of these activities only run if the numbers are viable, but students certainly appreciate this very wide list of options. In the second term of Year 12 a few students choose to participate in

community service as an alternative to games. This is organised through the Le Chavetois society, named after a teacher who worked at the school before the First World War. Students can opt out of games in the last term of Year 12 and Year 13, but few do so.

80. A good range of extra-curricular opportunities both supports and extends the curriculum and provides memorable experiences for students. Sport squads, particularly in rugby, Eton Fives, basketball and netball, and musical groups, such as the jazz band, chamber orchestra, symphony orchestra and saxophone group, all attract very high numbers. The chess club is very popular. An amateur radio society and Christian Union meet once a week. Students travel abroad for foreign language study and for music and sport tours. They go on field and residential trips and visit theatres, museums and galleries. They take part in national competitions. There are European work links and experience of work shadowing. In school, an annual magazine is published and regular debates are organised by sixth-formers. In the last year the sixth-formers put on a large-scale musical production, which was highly acclaimed.

81. It is clear from interviews that parents and students regard these opportunities as among the strengths of the school and they greatly appreciate the generous time that many members of staff give to them. The one area which both groups find less satisfactory is drama. Neither drama nor theatre studies are offered in the sixth form so there is no drama department. There are no drama clubs, and in recent years there have been no drama productions of serious plays or presentations of plays being studied. Developments in this area would add much to the cultural and social life of the school.

82. Excellent links between the design and technology department and other establishments such as commercial enterprises, museums and universities, mean that students can work with professionals and gain scholarships; these certainly boost their confidence. One project, to improve the appearance and purpose of the school quadrangle as an area for reflection and relaxation, is particularly impressive. This project, amongst others, reflects the growing importance that the school attaches to the design and technology department.

83. Students do not participate in a daily act of collective worship, which is a statutory requirement. The school's Chaplaincy offers fine spiritual support for those students who wish to participate, and Eucharist services are held weekly. School assemblies, although containing a bible reading, prayer and hymn, were rarely spiritually uplifting during the inspection, and several students commented that they do not find them enriching experiences. The high moral and social standards that the school expects are conveyed in assemblies and by the manner in which teachers and staff treat students. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a high percentage of students stated that they were treated as responsible young adults. Issues are debated enthusiastically in general studies, and in many subjects. Students particularly enjoy the cut and thrust of debate about ethical, political and moral issues in general studies.

84. Despite being a Church of England foundation, the school admits students of all faiths, because academic ability is the determinant of entry. It is excellent that Catholic, Hindu, Moslem and other faith students choose to attend assemblies. They value the strong sense of community these generate. Racial equality is embedded in the school's philosophy and approach to all activities. Students note how well they all get on together, and any minor incidents of thoughtless behaviour or comments are dealt with firmly and fast. Teachers naturally discuss cultural differences as they arise in studies, particularly in art, English, classics, history and modern foreign languages, but the

school has not monitored whether all subjects, for example science and geography, do as much as they could to prepare students for their future lives in the multi-ethnic and multi-faith United Kingdom.

85. Most French lessons consider interesting social and moral issues and confront them in the context of the cultural values of a different country. Students delight in participating in lively debate and in the intellectual enjoyment derived from playing with the French language. Spiritual, moral and ethical issues are addressed particularly well in the study of classical history and literature. The social and cultural aspects of the ancient world are studied in depth. This inter-disciplinary subject includes many cross-curricular themes, such as political, geographical and economic elements. The music curriculum focuses mainly on traditional western music and does not contribute as much as it should to students' knowledge of world music.

THE SCHOOL'S CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS

Assessment

86. Tutors remain with their group of students throughout the sixth form, and get to know their academic standards well because they receive and analyse regular reports in between. Those doing well are encouraged, and those whose performance give cause for concern receive support, from their subject teachers and the sixth-form pastoral team. At present this analysis is subjective. It relies on teachers' gradings in four categories rather than information based more objectively on students' past achievements, and their present performance against predicted grades. National data comparing GCSE performance with expected A-level grades is not used, so tutors are unaware of those few students who have not, or are not likely to, achieve their full potential.

87. Nevertheless, assessment is regular and rigorous. Students always have the opportunity to discuss their marks and performance with teachers and they are given accurate information about their work – teachers are fully aware of the examination board standards. The problems with the computer studies coursework last academic year were unusual, and this situation has been resolved. Subject teachers give their students explicit advice and guidance. Those Year 12 students who show a tendency to relax after GCSE respond well to the discipline imposed on them, so that by Year 13 all are working more consistently and effectively, completing work and engaging in a higher level of class discussion. Overall the school's assessment and monitoring of students' academic performance is good.

Advice, support and guidance

88. Students and their parents receive very helpful advice about subjects on offer in the sixth form, although taster lessons are not provided. For subjects such as economics and classical studies, this may be helpful, as some students find their fourth AS course hard to select. Nevertheless, in the pre-inspection questionnaire, almost three quarters of students felt the advice they received in Year 11 was helpful. Those who needed to change courses at the beginning of Year 12 had no difficulty doing so.

89. Occasionally one or two Year 11 pupils transfer to other schools or colleges to take vocational courses, but in 2001 all Year 11 stayed on. Before students from outside apply for the sixth form, they spend a morning at school. Later they attend interviews and take examination papers for their preferred AS subjects. Once offered a place they, not their parents, receive several letters welcoming them and explaining procedures.

This reflects the thought and care given to their welcome. By the time lessons commence in September, all sixth-form students have had presentations from various Year 13 students with responsibilities, met many teachers and they get off to a fine start. After a few weeks their parents attend an induction evening and the students go away for a residential period when they all get to know each other. Induction procedures are excellent.

90. Tutors are chosen with subject expertise relevant to their groups. The allocation of female students to tutor groups is considered thoughtfully. All the girls spoken to were happy and confident and the male students admit they have had a calming influence on behaviour. One admitted he missed the rugby culture of Year 11. Support for pastoral problems is readily available; the head of sixth-form's office is located between the two common rooms. He, and the assistant head of sixth form, are sensitive and attentive to students' needs. They also appreciate that some students prefer to seek personal advice outside school, indicated by the students' questionnaire responses, and arrange for sessions with a Bromley counselling service if necessary.

91. Careers advice is now based within the pastoral support programme. Only a third of pupils felt well advised about what they should do for a career or after leaving school. There is a good stock of information in the careers library, but because almost all students continue into higher education, the school does not discuss future work options widely enough to possibly influence students' university and gap year considerations. Neither is there a comprehensive programme of work experience or work-shadowing. Because applications to Oxford and Cambridge universities are made earlier than others, some students perceive that these universities are given too much priority. The school now targets applications for all universities for the same deadline. Those whose planned career paths do not take them directly to university also feel that they are isolated in pursuing this option. In fact the school encourages gap year programmes, both with advice and financial support. The school had problems, now resolved, about staffing the careers programme in the last academic year and the head of the sixth form acknowledges this is an area for development. A teacher has been appointed with specific responsibility for careers, Young Enterprise and key skills.

92. Over many years, various benefactors have bequeathed money for the alleviation of hardship or for the encouragement of specific aspects of students' education. Substantial grants are made for sixth-formers to travel abroad. The school's close links with the Marshall's Educational Foundation, which date back to the seventeenth century, mean that many valuable university and other awards are made annually by the Marshall's governors. Interesting projects funded by this organisation include an Asian Culture society in school, and support for Headstart engineering, bell ringing, Greek summer school and financial management experience in the city. The Woodard Corporation funds masterclasses and prefects' training courses. Thus students are very well supported financially to pursue a variety of academic and non-academic interests, which is excellent.

93. Each year the school uses its own questionnaire to consult students and to check both their response to lessons and the amount of time spent studying out of lessons. The format could usefully be extended to give an overall picture of sixth-form provision, covering other aspects such as induction, careers and teaching styles. Overall the school provides students with very good educational and personal support and guidance, and ensures their health and safety very well.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management

94. The governing body is rightly proud of the sixth form and the very high standards it generates. Governors bring considerable academic and business expertise to their deliberations and fulfil their responsibilities most effectively. For many years, the chair of finance, a mathematician and accountant, has monitored the school budget and plans meticulously. All financial procedures are in place. Meetings are held three times a term and the committee regularly advises the full governing body on strategic plans. Exciting plans for a new sports pavilion and refurbishment of the changing rooms are being scrutinised carefully at present. A sufficient number of quotations has been obtained for all the major and smaller elements of this venture. Income and expenditure per student, including the foundation's generous contribution, are high compared to national figures, but funds are spent prudently. The percentage spent on technical and support staff is relatively high, but these people all perform valuable tasks that take the pressure off teachers. The science technicians give a most superb service. As a result, for example, four separate chemistry groups in Year 12 function smoothly. Chemistry results in 2001 were very high.

95. Thus the strategic use of resources, specific grants and other funding, particularly from the foundation, is very good. The principles of best value are applied very well. The chair of finance is fully aware that the sixth form needs to be viable and not drain resources from the main school. For example, small Latin and Greek classes run because the classical studies classes are large, so the notional budget balances out. Technically, the budget spent on the sixth form slightly exceeds its income but, with foundation money involved as well, the integral nature of, and the benefits the whole school reaps from it, the sixth form is in no way over-funded. All boys and students benefit from recent spending, such as the swimming pool, which was costly and continues to be expensive to run. The new science block has certainly contributed to the overall very high standards attained in biology, chemistry and physics. In 1997 the Sunday Times placed St Olave's as second in the country for providing value for money in achieving the highest A-level grades. As results have improved considerably since then, and the budget has risen no more than other schools, it is still the case that the sixth form gives very good value for money and is highly effective.

96. Governors are fully involved in the school's long-term and major plans and they certainly take note of the results each summer. As faculty reviews and development plans are too general (see paragraphs 27 to 31) it is not surprising that governors do not consider in any depth the quality of teaching, whether it is stimulating, whether any departments or individual teachers are more effective than others, and whether teachers' objectives for performance management are worthwhile, in terms of professional development and improving teaching even more. Standards have continued to go up in recent years, but they will not hit the ceiling until all teaching is as good as the best. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's sixth-form performance, and taking effective action, is sound at present.

97. The headmaster's and the governing body's decision to allow female students in the sixth form was implemented very successfully in 1998. In the headmaster's appraisal review in 2000, it was stated that he 'had considerably altered the school's ethos, and made it more caring…softening the old, masculine, macho image'. This he has done, whilst supporting the school's reputation and traditions and successfully determining to raise standards. He is ably supported by the head and assistant head of sixth form. These senior managers and the sixth-form tutors give up much time to make sure that

all students enjoy their two years, as well as achieving academic success. Within the context of the whole school, the sixth form is very well led and managed.

Resources

98. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff for the curriculum are very good. It is only in ICT that the school has advertised many times and failed to appoint a head of department. The contribution of the technical and support staff to the smooth running of the school has been mentioned in paragraph 94. The accommodation is good and the new science block is excellent. All the laboratories have safe storage and attractive workspaces. Technical support rooms are large enough to support the considerable numbers of sixth-form groups. One history teacher has to use a mobile classroom some distance from the department, which makes it difficult to use resources. Economics lessons take place in relatively small rooms, which can be cramped. This inhibits discussion and different approaches to teaching.

99. Wall displays are good in some areas and satisfactory in others – they are not very exciting in geography or music. The school spends generously on resources, so that sixth-form students broadly have enough textbooks and equipment and overall provision is good. Provision for ICT has improved with new computer upgrades and increased technical support, although peripheral equipment is limited. There is no interactive whiteboard to improve computer studies students' oral presentations when they feed back about their progress to the rest of the class. The ration of computers to students is about average. The design and technology department lacks computer-aided design and manufacture technology to support engineering work.

PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for A-level courses completed in 2001. No Year 12 AS results are given as these have not been accredited yet.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
Taken by Year 13		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	4	100	83	50	23	3.25	2.27
Economics	7	100	73	43	22	3.00	1.94
French	5	100	78	20	13	3.20	1.65
General studies	47	98	77	70	19	4.00	1.92

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	16	94	96	38	46	6.75	6.57
Biology	24	100	88	63	34	7.42	5.25
Chemistry	38	100	90	84	43	8.84	5.90
Classical studies	14	100	95	86	49	8.86	6.51
Computer studies	11	82	86	45	23	6.00	4.62
Economics	53	98	89	66	36	7.81	5.52
English literature	39	97	95	79	37	8.62	5.91
French	13	100	89	85	38	8.46	5.59
Full design and technology	6	100	91	100	30	9.33	5.38
Geography	29	97	92	38	38	5.86	5.74
German	9	100	91	100	40	9.11	5.81
History	33	94	88	73	35	7.70	5.45
Mathematics	84	98	87	87	43	8.74	5.80
Music	3	100	93	100	35	8.67	5.74
Other languages	1	100	93	100	56	10.00	6.84
Physics	40	100	88	63	40	7.65	5.67
Religious studies	1	100	92	100	38	8.00	5.84

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

All subjects in this curriculum area were examined in depth.

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **excellent**.

Strengths
- Consistently very high standards and achievement for the past six years.
- Very good teaching, excellent subject knowledge, very good relationships and high expectations, so lessons are both supportive and challenging.
- Very good leadership and management. The curriculum is well planned and courses are very well managed.
- Students' excellent attitudes to their studies.

Areas for improvement
- The limited amount of ICT resources reduces the planning and full integration of ICT in lessons.

100. Mathematics is the most popular A-level subject with 90 students taking the examinations in 2001. Students' average points score has been consistently very high for the last six years, with around 80 per cent of candidates achieving grades A/B. In the same period there has been a similar performance in A-level further mathematics – all students attained A/B grades in 2000 and 2001. Marks for the AS- level in 2001 show that 74 per cent of students attained A/B grades and 91 per cent grades A to C. Male students attain higher points scores than females do. Students achieve very highly.

101. The evidence from work seen in lessons and from students' files is consistent with these very high standards. In Year 12, students' files reflect a broader range of attainment at the start of the course than might be expected from GCSE results, but students make very good progress developing their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts. There is a good emphasis on algebra with the majority of students confident in manipulating algebraic expressions, equations and inequalities, with just the occasional lapse in work with brackets and fractions. For a few students progress is slower and in a Year 12 lesson on trigonometric identities they were clearly less skilled in manipulating algebraic relationships. All students are confident with differentiation and integration and sketching graphs of functions. There is good work in mechanics on centre of gravity, moments and projectiles and written work shows students have a good command of the basic theory. When asked individually about their work students respond well, and show a good understanding of the topic being studied.

102. Students in Year 13 discuss their work and contribute to lessons very confidently. They remember topics studied earlier and transfer previous knowledge into new situations very well and extend their understanding as they do so. In a lesson developing methods for solving trigonometric equations, students demonstrated a sound knowledge of underlying concepts and were able to quote the appropriate sum and difference formulae without reference to formula booklets. They dealt confidently with trigonometric identities, could sketch the graphs of functions of compound angles and solve equations for principal values. Skills in algebra and analysis are very well established, as is work with calculus; students coped well with some demanding problems in integration by parts. Students' work is extremely well presented and they record essential information clearly, which helps their revision. However, there is little

evidence of their skills in ICT being exploited to extend their understanding of mathematics.

103. Teaching is very good. All the teaching seen was very good or excellent. Teachers have considerable subject knowledge and teach confidently. Relationships between students and teachers are very good and learning is both effective and enjoyable. Teachers have high expectations and probe students' understanding with demanding questioning throughout lessons. Students respond well to this combination of support and challenge. In a Year 12 lesson on the binomial expansion, the teacher made excellent use of practical investigations to develop the theory. As they applied their research skills students were reminded of the effectiveness of looking for patterns. The style of this lesson helped them to establish a structure for the terms of the expansion. From his research one student explained how to derive the general form of the coefficient.

104. Teachers adapt the style and pace of their lesson exceptionally well to meet the needs of different classes. Students have excellent attitudes to their learning and respond well to the targeted questioning that keeps them on their toes. In working through examples the individual support from teachers is very effective in meeting the different needs of students. In a Year 13 lesson on solving trigonometric equations the teacher used questions very well to summarize previous work on this topic before developing the theory and techniques for solution, and then checked each students' progress and understanding as they worked through a set of problems.

105. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department provides very good direction for the sixth-form courses. There is a clear focus on sustaining very high achievement by continually developing teaching styles and the curriculum. Students' progress is assessed regularly and monitored against their expected level of performance. Resources for mathematics are very good, but resources to exploit ICT lack development and detailed integration of ICT in the curriculum.

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **very good.**

Strengths
- Students' high performance and their strong, keen drive to learn.
- Teachers' mastery of the subject.
- The high quality of comments on class work, which encourages progress.

Areas for improvement
- Not always drawing the less confident and capable students into discussions.
- The occasional lack of rigorous and intellectual challenge to raise all students' achievement. Students do not use sharp enough specific targets.
- Too little exploration and sharing of imaginative teaching styles.

106. Apart from a slight dip in 2000, A-level results have been very high over the last four years. Over 60 per cent of students attained grades A/B in 2001, the rest grades C and D. As seen nationally, the average points score students attain for biology is lower than that for chemistry, and close to that for physics. Generally fewer students study biology than the other two sciences. AS marks show that a significant proportion of Year 13 should attain the highest grades.

107. Year 13 students' overall standard of work is very high and their achievement is very good. A few, however, are underachieving. The great majority of students increase their knowledge and understanding because they have a strong drive to learn. This was

clearly demonstrated in a lesson that reviewed ideas about the female reproductive system. Students reasoned out why fertilised egg cells can be frozen successfully. The quality of their learning was further enriched as they cheerfully shared each other's knowledge about how jetlag could possibly alter the menstrual cycle. Analysis of their work shows their high degree of competence in distilling essential ideas from sources, to make succinct notes. This helps their reflection and contributes well towards raising standards. On the other hand, the intellectual rigour needed to apply several ideas is less strong and their explanations can be superficial, for instance when dealing with the biochemistry of respiration. They do not always use technical language enough.

108. Many more students are studying biology in Year 12 than in the last academic year. Overall, they are progressing well from their high GCSE grades. Only a few are underachieving because they find the volume of work daunting and are not always given guidance about how to tackle it systematically. Analysis of students' work shows their strong interest in the subject. Most are successfully moving on from GCSE work into new areas, for example in deepening their knowledge about osmotic pressure within cells. Where there are exceptions, the pace of learning is slowed down by disorganised and unfinished work. Mostly, students are learning well to distinguish fact and opinion, use evidence, and choose relevant information in support of their ideas.

109. Students' analyses of experimental results are usually detailed and refer to fundamental ideas about science. For example, by explaining the effect temperature has upon the breakdown of hydrogen peroxide by the enzyme, catalase, in terms of 'collision theory'. On the other hand, their work also showed that basic details, such as naming units, are missed and brevity of answers leads to misconceptions. Throughout the sixth form, students' marked aptitude and interest in mathematics means they deal competently with complex calculations and formulae. Their precision in analysing data increases as teachers stress the importance of this skill.

110. Teaching is good overall and, with the compelling motivation of the majority of students, it adds to the very good quality of their learning. The quality of teaching seen ranged from very good to satisfactory. Teachers are strikingly knowledgeable and use their expertise well giving explanations, and drawing out facts from students to build up and structure ideas. This valuable resource is not used rigorously enough to stimulate intellectual demands made upon students. Teachers and students get on well together. In a Year 12 class they enjoyed spirited, relevant banter; batting ideas to each other in a happy atmosphere; learning about biological systems clearly took place. Not all students, in both years, are confident to offer ideas in open discussion and they are not always brought into question and answer dialogues as much as they could be.

111. Students in a Year 13 class made very good progress in widening experiences of practical work learning about the effect temperature has on the permeability of cell membranes of plants, because opportunities for them to explore this phenomena themselves were thoroughly planned. Again, all this was done with good humour. The best teaching is imaginative and enthusiastic, has ambitiously high expectations of what students are capable of achieving and pleasantly reassures them as they do so. However, certain aspects of teaching hinder learning; dull planning, a pace which tends to slow down as lessons proceed – cutting down on challenge – and omission of constructive summaries.

112. Marking is generally consistent and constructive. The best practice gives students clear indications about how well they are progressing and, in encouraging further progress, gives them 'cause for thought' and checks that comments have been acted upon.

113. The subject is soundly managed. Teachers work hard using their skills and talents to good effect in supporting students. Preparation areas are expertly organised; science technicians make a strong contribution to the quality of education in biology and are highly valued. Although information about students' standards is not yet fully computerised, their performance is increasingly being evaluated through analysis of examination and test results. Such data are not yet used to sharply identify specific learning targets in the subject for individual students, which would be a useful extension of this analysis.

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is **excellent**.

Strengths
- The sequence of activities that are carefully planned to encourage high achievement.
- Teachers' excellent knowledge of the subject and the examination requirements.
- Teachers' willingness to listen to students and to give them individual support.

Areas for improvement
- Ways to sustain continuous high achievement for the small minority who find some aspects of advanced chemistry difficult.

114. A-level results in 2001 were very high, as they have been for several years. Over 80 per cent of students attained grades A/B. The six female students all attained grade A. Data on the students' performance in the AS examinations, taken by Year 12 in 2001, show that this high level of attainment has been maintained. Chemistry is consistently the most popular of the three sciences.

115. Achievement throughout the two years of the course is outstanding. Male and female students achieve equally well. Students' work shows the excellent improvement they make as they progress from Year 12 to Year 13. Chemistry remains a popular subject and very few drop the subject at the end of Year 12. Students work very hard and make very good progress in lessons, whether evaluating their recent mock examinations or beginning new topics. Some students are so enthusiastic about the subject that they voluntarily help to run a highly successful chemistry club for pupils in Year 8.

116. Work seen in both years is of a very high standard. Year 12 students draw, analyse and compare three dimension models and formulae of substances such as polymers most effectively. Teachers ask very good probing questions and students work hard to give short concise answers. As a result they have a very good understanding of important chemical changes, for example what radiation can do to the molecules in the atmosphere. Students' notes are very good, though they reveal that they do not read widely enough around topics. This would help them to feel more confident at the beginning of lessons. Teachers work hard and very effectively to generate confidence, by structuring questions and activities in a logical order.
117. Students remember important concepts because they learned them well in the past. For example, when asked to predict the effects of changes in temperature and pressure during a chemical reaction, they confidently and accurately predicted whether more or less of the required product would be obtained. They are adept at applying chemistry concepts to other areas, such as agriculture and medicine. They collect valid and reliable data in well-organised practical investigations and most refine their existing concepts in the process. A few do not evaluate some of the methods they use critically enough. Nevertheless, students apply their mathematical skills very well to calculate solutions efficiently and prepare revision notes in a logical sequence.

118. Teaching is very good and it has several excellent features. Recently appointed and well-established teachers have combined their skills very effectively, so that very high levels of achievement have been maintained during this period of change. Presenting the students with excellent male and female role models, they display excellent management skills and subject knowledge. When these are combined with excellent presentations, obvious enthusiasm for the subject and lively interactions tinged with humour, students particularly enjoy lessons. They concentrate, participate, and hone their understanding before successfully embarking on the next carefully planned task. In one such lesson, a teacher also generated considerable interest by discussing the commercial requirements and characters involved in the major development of manufacturing nitrates from atmospheric gases. Students were attentive throughout the lesson and most gained confidence in their own ability to succeed.

119. Teachers also show considerable patience, care and sensitivity when they very effectively challenge students to build on prior knowledge, and to learn from their earlier mistakes. As a result, students not only understand chemistry concepts well but also appreciate the importance of evaluating their own study methods. They have great satisfaction in the success they have come to expect, but equally accept that they are partly responsible if they do not achieve as well as they could. Examination of work shows that students' responses to the well-planned programme cover a wider range than expected, considering their high prior attainment. Teachers, therefore, organise as many additional tutorials as they can. However, such support for individuals, both within and between lessons, is not as efficient as it could be, so these procedures are currently under review.

120. Indeed, to maintain excellent provision, the department has an established programme for auditing and updating teaching and learning styles. At the time of the last inspection work was not well planned. Too many topics were repeated unnecessarily, with much repetition, so some students underachieved. Since then achievement and improvement have been excellent, the results speak for themselves. To secure further advances, the new head of department is sensibly evaluating how effective the recently updated schemes of work have been. A top priority, identified prior to the inspection, is to further improve how teachers guide students to progress more independently towards their agreed, specific individual targets. This priority exactly mirrors the importance that the school places upon the highest possible achievement.

Overall, the quality of provision in physics is **good**.

Strengths
- Consistently well above average A-level results.
- Highly motivated students who enjoy the subject. They have open and friendly relationships with their teachers.
- Teachers generate high expectations for academic success by using their expertise effectively to broaden and deepen learning. Their give very helpful feedback about homework.
- Very good accommodation and resources.

Areas for improvement
- Planning, particularly in the schemes of work, for the full range of attainment within

groups so that all students participate actively and extend their learning fully.
- More rigorous use of assessment data to identify any underachievement.

121. A-level results in 2001 were well above average. Over 60 per cent of students attained grades A/B, although no female student attained grade A. Male and female students achieve well from their high levels of attainment at GCSE. Results have improved since the last inspection; they have been consistently well above average for the past three years.

122. The standard of work seen in the four lessons observed, and evidence from discussions and analysis of student files, is well above expectations. There is significant variation in quality of students' work, but overall they achieve well. Many grasp concepts quickly and apply them successfully to challenging problems, for example Year 13 students understood the details of fundamental nuclear particles, and carried out independent research on the use of accelerators. Their mathematical skills are very strong and support the application of the physics to complex problems.

123. Students in Year 12 have more variable aptitudes for physics, but are achieving well overall as they acquire basic knowledge, for example in the behaviour of materials under stress. Their investigation skills are less well developed so a significant number of them lack deep understanding of the principles of experimental reliability and evaluation of error. This is because they spend a limited time practising and developing these skills.

124. Teaching is good overall. When it is very good, teachers develop students' knowledge in a lively, inspirational way, so they respond enthusiastically and learn very effectively. All lessons are well organised and students benefit from the teachers' expert knowledge. Expectations are high. Students are confident and encouraged by the helpful, friendly and supportive climate that pervades. Teachers set constructive homework and their regular marking tells students clearly how well they are learning.

125. Planning is satisfactory in that it relates all objectives appropriately to the new examination specifications. However, too few activities are planned for the full range of students' attainment, so the relatively lower attaining students are not always supported enough to fully understand new material. Not all students participate actively and, whilst they absorb and acquire knowledge, they do not deepen their learning by asking questions or raising points for clarification often enough. Teachers use practical work and ICT regularly to add variety and to make learning interesting and they are developing techniques to improve students' investigation skills. Staffing changes last academic year had very little impact on progress, and the department coped as well as possible. The overall good quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection.

126. Students apply their initiative and considerable intelligence to consolidate their learning and understanding of complex ideas. They work independently and also share ideas with great maturity. They use a variety of resources efficiently to clarify, for example, their understanding of the superposition of waves. Most students approach work with a positive attitude, which is a major contributory factor to their overall good learning.

127. The department is satisfactorily led and managed. Daily routines, equipment and resources are organised efficiently and the teachers work well together as a team. The large well-equipped laboratories contribute to the very pleasant atmosphere. The development plan rightly focuses on continued improvement of equipment but it does not cover specific ways of improving learning and raising standards further. Teaching is

monitored by department reviews and analysis of examination results but neither is done rigorously. Targets relating students' GCSE performance with national data about predicted A-level grades are not set.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The single subject in this curriculum area was examined in depth.

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **very good**.

Strengths
- The quality of the individual support.
- The accuracy and use of assessment data to promote the highest possible achievement.
- Highly appropriate projects that generate commercial quality products.

Areas for improvement
- The lack of computer assisted manufacture for students' engineering work.

128. Attainment in the full design technology course in 2001 was very high. Three male and three female students attained four grade As and two grade Bs. 2001 AS marks show that results in 2003 are likely to be as high. The subject is becoming more popular and there are early indications that far more Year 12 students will continue to A-level than did last year.

129. Achievement is outstanding. This is because students gain enthusiasm and confidence over time. Year 12 students are enthusiastic about their projects, which include disposable spoons, innovative music stands and chairs to reduce injury to those who sit for a long time in front of computers. They are enthusiastic because they are working on products that they believe are useful. By evaluating each other's work and sharing ideas, students sharpen the focus of their own work. Teachers make sure that students learn quickly to talk things through and to be prepared when challenged, as they frequently are, to defend the decisions they have made. Male and female students benefit from the highest quality of discussions they have with male, female and trainee teachers. Half way through Year 13, students confidently explain their decisions to academics, professionals and visitors. Their responses are highly impressive.

130. Attainment in the work seen is very high. Year 12 students research existing products and needs with focus and speed. They use both conventional and electronic methods to prepare an excellent range of design ideas from which to choose one option to develop. They use a wide range of skills and make products of the highest quality. Having prepared templates, one female student had managed to fabricate a mild steel structure for a chair; this had a cantilever structure to provide good stability and comfort. Not only was the final painted appearance really impressive but also the chair sat squarely, looked good and was clearly capable of doing the job for which it had been so expertly designed.

131. Year 13 students also attain very high standards. They are very confident and are capable of exceeding the A-level requirements. The same qualities seen in Year 12 are evident. They reveal the excellent continuity and carefully planned, continually challenging sequences that underpin the two-year course. Projects display students' excellent competence, for example an exercise machine to reduce the likelihood of rugby neck injuries, and the professionally designed and constructed, energy and materials efficient prototype, of a modular bicycle system for urban transport. Students' competence is highlighted by how well they describe and justify the key decisions they

have made, and how convincingly they present products. These show their thorough understanding of relevant concepts, for example from physics or human biology. Students respond very thoughtfully when teachers question them at length and their self-esteem rises. They quite justifiably take tremendous pride in their achievements.

132. Teaching is excellent. The teachers have excellent understanding of the examination requirements and plan, with students, every learning step so that students know exactly what to do to gain more marks. Methods, to make sure that students can proceed independently, as required, are being upgraded and were improved from an already high state of effectiveness during the inspection. Because of the excellent long-term planning, the students progressively gain confidence by using skills and concepts placed in a sequence appropriate for the task.

133. Excellent links, between the school and other establishments such as commercial enterprises, museums and universities, mean that students can work with professionals and gain scholarships; these certainly boost their confidence. One project, to improve the appearance and purpose of the school quadrangle as an area for reflection and relaxation, is particularly impressive. This project, amongst others, reflects the growing importance which the school attaches to the subject. All of this excellent development and achievement is based upon the excellent quality of the one-to-one support. Anticipating increasing numbers of students, the department is very effectively modifying its systems to show students how to learn independently so that high quality provision is maintained.

134. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good; all the issues have been addressed very well. It is to the department's credit that the school acknowledges the importance of this subject as an A-level and as a valuable career. Leadership of the department is excellent. The teachers possess all the skills needed to integrate new technology. Students already use computers effectively to analyse data and to control machines such as vinyl cutters. However, the computer-aided design applications, introduced in the last few months, have not yet had their full impact. Metal cutting programmes are not good enough to attain the highest possible standards.

BUSINESS

The single subject in this curriculum area was examined in depth.

Overall, the quality of provision in economics is **very good**.

Strengths
- Well above average results in 2001 – a considerable improvement on the previous two years.
- Enthusiastic, knowledgeable and sensitive teachers. Preparation for the new examination requirements has been excellent. The number of students taking economics has doubled since 1998.
- Students are keen and respond very positively to the intellectual challenges of the subject.

Areas for improvement
- The extension of students' learning so they acquire a wider range of skills.
- Resources – the range needs to be increased, developed and improved.

135. Since 1998 the number of students choosing economics has doubled. A-level results improved significantly last year – 66 per cent of students gained A/B grades. This is

well above average and almost in line with the school's other A-level results. The six female students' average points scores were not quite as strong as the male students'. Having dipped, last year's results were the best ever. This is because preparation and organisation for the new examinations has been excellent. AS marks in 2001 were very high, suggesting that improvement continues and that achievement is very good.

136. Standards of work in both years are high. Year 12 students, who have completed just over a term of study, already confidently and skilfully analyse complex relationships, for example the link between interest and exchange rate changes. Almost all Year 13 students evaluate the effectiveness of different economic policies most competently, for example assessing the impact of globalisation on domestic economic policies or considering the relative merits of interest rate changes. They apply economic theory to a wide range of contexts and show a sophisticated grasp of contemporary economic and political issues. On numerous occasions students commented on how much they appreciate and value the relevance of this subject: 'It means that I understand economic reporting on the news more easily than those students who take other subjects'. Students respond with considered thought and reflection when they answer questions but, in lessons seen during the inspection, they did not debate energetically amongst themselves. With such very good subject knowledge and expertise, teachers occasionally find it difficult to stand back!

137. Student files are well ordered and extremely comprehensive, although they contain little evidence of long pieces of writing or wider research. The use of ICT, especially the Internet, is limited. Students are thus not fully prepared for university work and careers where they are likely to need to access up-to-date information regularly. Nevertheless, teachers make sure that examples and applications of economic concepts are relevant and up-to-date. Students have good texts and teachers use current newspaper articles to good effect but other significant resources, such as extracts from film or television programmes, are less well exploited. Lessons take place in relatively small rooms, which can be cramped. This inhibits discussion and different approaches to teaching. Students, especially in Year 13, are not given enough responsibility, for example by undertaking research tasks, preparing papers and leading seminar style sessions, so that they would be even better prepared for university studies and beyond.

138. Teaching is good overall and it is always enthusiastic. Students respond by confidently asking questions to confirm their understanding. This was seen in a lesson where they probed the relationships between investment and key variables, such as interest rates and gross domestic product. Teachers provide clear explanations of complex theory and give students very useful handouts summarising key points. These also provide helpful models of how students can organise their own notes. Teachers set tests regularly and mark work with helpful suggestions about where improvements could be made. Their praise for students' achievements could be more explicit.

139. Teamwork and department collaboration are good. Development planning does not focus enough on identifying long-term objectives. Individual results, progress, and measures of past and predicted achievement, according to gender and ethnicity, are not analysed, for example to consider why the small number of females taking economics perform less well. Lesson observations are not used enough to share and develop good practice.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The single subject in this curriculum area was examined in depth.

Overall, the quality of provision in computer studies is **very good.**

Strengths
- High standards.
- Very good teaching. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and expertise.
- Students learn very well and have excellent attitudes to their work.
- Students' course work projects involve a good variety of real industrial users.

Areas for improvement
- More systematic analysis of individual students' potential is needed so that more frequent targets can be given in lessons.

140. Computer studies is a popular option with 18 students, in two classes, currently taking AS, and eight taking A-level. Nine out of eleven students attained very high results in 2001, four with A grades, but as the other two did not attain any grade, the overall points score was only well above average. AS marks in 2001 were well above average. Students understood the theory very well and gained high marks. The high standards noted in the last inspection have been well maintained, although A-level results dipped in 1999 and 2000.

141. Year 12 AS students can explain the advantages of using separate modules in Visual Basic. They can import a code module, and develop very good programming skills. Some have developed their own programming skills from a young age at home. Students fluently consolidate previous skills by modifying programs, to run wages calculations, for example, and to successfully program Access queries using Basic. They test routines by running queries. Students have successfully completed theory modules on networking concepts and hardware principles and devices. The third practical module requires students to demonstrate their skills of analysing, designing, implementing and testing, and evaluation. Several students find writing evaluations difficult and these are sometimes too brief. Not all students were fully aware of the nature of calculated fields or the how routines could be applied to their coursework projects. They were, however, developing very good skills to use in the examining board project to create a series of relational databases for a healthcare equipment supplier.

142. Year 13 students have a good understanding of basic assembler coding, including the use of branching techniques and, in an excellent lesson seen, began to develop very good looping techniques in order to modify programs already written. They could rapidly write and execute a program to multiply two numbers in different locations together, and put the result in a third location. With sustained effort, they reached their potential in a relatively short time. They are preparing a good variety of coursework projects. Most involve real users outside school; for example, one student is designing a system to keep a record of car parts for his father's shop. Achievement over time and progress in lessons is very good.

143. Teaching and learning in three of the four lessons seen was very good, and excellent in the lesson described above. Students learnt at a rapid pace because, having given a brief input, involving clear illustrations on the whiteboard, the teacher allowed students enough time to practise their developing skills of reinforcing key theory points in Visual Basic. Having written their short programs, students enthusiastically tested them, working independently but also offering each other support when required.

144. The teacher's planning is excellent. An example is the 'assimulator' package he has written especially to support teaching of assembler programs, an additional element to

the standard A-level syllabus for high attaining students. In lessons, he frequently challenges individual students to explain routines, so that he is sure everyone understands the concepts. Students' learning was well monitored as the teacher walked round to assess progress, although students were not given specific individual targets, which would have been useful for those who had been absent from some previous lessons. Frequent homework is given to test theory and develop course work projects, and in samples of work seen it is assessed regularly and constructively.

145. The standard of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, especially with regard to subject expertise and the quality of planning, especially in the schemes of work, which mean that all students are actively engaged in discussion and practical problem-solving tasks and developing high levels of programming skills. Overall provision has improved with new computer upgrades and increased technical support. Although the accommodation is satisfactory, peripheral equipment is limited. There is no interactive whiteboard to improve students' oral presentation and communication key skills when they feedback about their progress to the rest of the class. The subject is very well managed, and strategic development plans have been implemented very well.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Music was examined in depth. Seventeen students took A-level **art** in 2001, of whom one did not pass. With just over 40 per cent A/B grades, the overall points score was only just above average. At GCSE, art results are significantly lower than other subjects. Fourteen students are taking A-level this year and 18 AS. No lessons were observed but Year 12 students were working thoughtfully on their individual projects. They were evaluating the styles of different arts, in order to integrate ideas and techniques into their own work. They were working hard to meet tight deadlines.

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**. It is particularly good for students, such as keyboard players and singers, with traditional musical skills.

Strengths
- Well above average results matched by usually successful applications for university choral and organ scholarships. These students receive high quality support.
- The very good quality of instrumental tuition.
- The range and quality of extra-curricular instrumental and vocal groups.

Areas for improvement
- Teaching and learning which does not take place through musical activity.
- The lack of opportunities for students who have interests and skills in contemporary music and music technology.

146. AS- and A-level results are consistently well above average, though the number of students studying music in the sixth form is generally less than five. In 2000 twelve students took the examination and nine of them attained grade A. The best points score was in 1999. No female students has yet attained grade A.

147. During the inspection two Year 12 AS-level lessons were observed. Standards are above average. The first lesson focused on traditional composing techniques. Here, students were completing an extract of a keyboard composition by Handel. Students have a good knowledge of technical and musical terms, and good understanding of concepts such as phrase and cadence, but occasionally they lack confidence in

applying these to their work. In the second lesson seen students worked through part of an AS aural skills question. All attained good standards but three of the four required significant support from the teacher support to do this.

148. Teaching, including instrumental tuition is good overall. Students achieve well. The director of music has very good musical knowledge and is readily able to illustrate musical concepts and ideas at the keyboard. The atmosphere in lessons is warm and supportive and his enthusiasm for music shines through clearly. He offers good ways of dealing with any difficulties students encounter and marks their work in detail, with helpful comments. However teaching, which was satisfactory in the lessons seen, relies too much on reacting to students' errors. Lessons do not always have clear aims for what is to be learned and what difficulties students might encounter, so that students' progress building up skills and knowledge is not tightly structured. Activities do not centre enough on musical sounds, which would encourage independent learning. For example in completing the Handel keyboard piece, students worked at desks away from keyboards, despite the fact they can use them in the examination. This encourages students to think of these tasks as technical exercises rather than musical encounters and to abandon independent learning and flair in favour of slavishly following musical rules. In at least one instance this resulted in a student completing the exercise in a mechanical way with little idea of the musical sound being notated.

149. Many sixth-formers are well supported by a wide range of very good instrumental tuition. For those taking music AS- and A-level, this tuition contributes significantly to their success. Instrumental teachers also provide high quality support for the large number of traditional extra-curricular instrumental groups, which perform to a very high standard and in which many sixth-form students are fully involved. These include orchestras, wind bands, jazz bands, choirs and musical stage productions. Rehearsing a string group, a violin teacher skilfully demonstrated different ways to play a musical phrase and so students' technical progress was effectively linked to a pleasing musical result. Another teacher rehearsed two wind groups with enthusiasm and panache ensuring that pace never flagged and good progress was made. The director of music was observed rehearsing the school's senior choir in Stanford's 'Songs of the Fleet'. His clear and expert direction ensured crisp articulation, good vocal tone and a very good sense of style.

150. Although the music room provides enough space for small groups of sixth-formers, it is drab and provides little stimulation. Very old posters are in a poor state of repair. There are no displays of work. Resources are barely satisfactory. The department has not yet resolved the gap that exists between the school's provision and the music that boys experience beyond the school gates. There is no computer-based music technology in the music room to support those following examination courses. Also, despite the vast amount of instrumental tuition available, there are no opportunities for students to receive tuition on drum kit or electric guitars. Consequently, students whose interests might lie in the area of contemporary popular music and music technology, are unable to develop these interests in school and thus continue their formal music education in the sixth form.

151. The leadership and management of the department are good overall and very good in providing a musical education of high quality for those students who have traditional vocal and instrumental skills and who wish to continue with their musical studies at university. The director of music also organises and provides good support for the extensive range of instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities. Many of the peripatetic teachers are highly skilled performers and the quality of teaching is of a high

calibre. Performances by the large number of traditional extra-curricular instrumental groups are of a very high standard. Examples are included in paragraphs 7 and 53.

HUMANITIES

Classical studies, geography and history were examined in depth. The classics department is very strong and vibrant. Teaching in **Latin** and **Greek** is inspirational and standards are correspondingly outstanding, sometimes above the highest A-level grade. All three Year 13 students, two of whom have Oxbridge offers, attained A grade AS marks. The students' translation of difficult unseen passages from Roman authors is excellent. Students argue confidently about finer points of language interpretation. The lesson seen was like an exciting undergraduate seminar. In Year 12, four students learn extremely well because they are committed and ambitious. Teacher and taught strive for the highest possible standard of accuracy and English expression in translation. Two students have non-examination lessons in Greek language to help to prepare them for classics at university. In the one lesson observed the teacher's enthusiasm and love of the language were apparent. The two students' robust approach and their thirst for knowledge made them highly receptive and appreciative of the finer points under discussion.

Overall, the quality of provision in classical studies is **excellent**.

Strengths
- Teaching is authoritative, academic and dynamic.
- Well above average A-level results in 2001.
- The breadth of topics studied is impressive and the pace of lessons is invariably fast.

Areas for improvement
None.

152. Standards are very high and results at A-level in 2001 (after an unusual drop in 2000) were well above average. Twelve (eight male and four female) out of eighteen students attained A grades, the rest were grades B and C. In 1999 one student had the highest classical studies' mark in the country and received an award from the examination board. The tradition for higher education is firmly established. Every year between one and three students gain places at Oxford and Cambridge to read a classical subject, and other regularly take up places at other prestigious universities. In the 2001 AS examination, almost half the students attained A grade marks. Twelve students are continuing with the A-level course in Year 13.

153. Standards of work in all the lessons seen and in students' files are very high. Students approach their work critically, and handle very large amounts of literary and historical information confidently. Their essays and notes are well organised and thorough. The best essays and coursework are impressive and above A grade A-level standard. Students assume increasing responsibility for their own learning during the two years of the course. For instance, from their own research into imagery of language in Virgil's Aeneid, students gave effective presentations to the class and then shared their notes. Students discuss ideas and listen to each other attentively. Their knowledge and use of specialised language are very good. Their understanding of the nuances of political power in Roman politics, for example at the time of Tiberius, is mature.

154. A great strength of the department is the excellent quality of teaching, which has improved since the last inspection. The two teachers are highly competent and erudite classicists. Their knowledge is authoritative and their enthusiasm infectious. The pace of lessons is invariably brisk and the demands made on students are appropriately rigorous. Students make first rate progress. Skilful questioning allows students to discover much information for themselves. Good comparisons are made with the modern world. Storytelling is not neglected and students appreciate humorous touches.

155. Just occasionally a teacher's exposition is rather long but usually some small variety is introduced in time, such as a first-hand study of an ancient writer's opinion on the topic. Students learn exceptionally fast and well. This is partly because so much is expected of them, partly because they are self-motivated and partly because they have been exceptionally well trained. They are quick to make useful links between the literature, the culture and the history of the ancient world. Their general recall is very good, they are keen to improve and most are academically ambitious. They are helped by the exceptionally thorough marking of their work and the clear indications about how to improve.

156. This inter-disciplinary subject includes many cross-curricular themes, such as political, geographical and economic elements. In both years, modules are studied beyond the requirements for A-level. Although this increases the breadth of education and gives students a greater choice of examination questions, the advantages are offset by the increased and unnecessary bulk of work students have; it would be useful for the department to reconsider this policy, especially for Year 13.
157. Spiritual, moral and ethical issues are addressed particularly well in the study of classical history and literature. The social and cultural aspects of the ancient world are studied in depth. Exciting visits are organised every year. This year's expedition is to Rome and Pompeii. Visits to the theatre to see Greek plays, such as Medea, in translation are organised when possible. Since the last inspection displays in the classrooms have improved and the very good collection of classical books in the library has increased. Leadership of the department is excellent.

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths
- Excellent fieldwork which is blended into class work very well.
- A strong focus on the links between physical and human geography.
- Good support and preparation of materials, for those parts of the course that students find difficult.

Areas for improvement
- Students' research for presentations, which is too superficial at present.
- The features of teaching which contribute to a few students attaining lower than expected AS- and A-level grades.

158. In 1999 and 2000 geography results were well above average. In 2001 they dropped and were only in line with the national average, as they were in 1998. Just over one-third of students attained grades A/B. Several students underachieved, a few for personal reasons, despite the teachers' considerable efforts to offer them support and extra lessons. Geography was the lowest A-level grade for more students than it was their highest. It was also apparent that students who joined the school in the sixth form did not achieve as well as they should have done. Female students attained lower points scores than males in 2000 and 2001. The head of department is alert to all these

factors. Indeed the AS marks show that 50 per cent of both male and female students attained A/B grades. Present standards are above average in both years.

159. Students understand that the final paper of each year's course requires them to explain the relationship between the physical and human geography topics covered by the other two papers. They tackle these lessons well and in one lesson the teacher skilfully turned their comments into learning points. Discussing an examination question, the teacher gave the students the official marking scheme and encouraged them to consider whether they knew enough points for full marks, a good way to make students be self-critical. A helpful debate followed in which students also commented on the quality of the mark scheme. The teacher then offered much sensible advice about essay planning, but students' suggestions for possible exemplars, to support the points they would make, were not explored fully. Many geography students make bland statements about the tropical rainforest, so it is only those who have a sophisticated level of understanding that attain the highest grades.

160. All four teachers in the department deliver AS- and A-level units and students are taught by different combinations of three of them, which some students find helpful, but not all. Overall, students achieve well. Some students like a very straightforward approach, with notes written in full on the whiteboard to be copied – others find this rather dull. This method does not generate skills in note-taking or summarising information succinctly for examination answers, but it does ensure that all the basics are covered fully, which is good. During the inspection, a couple of lessons, on urbanisation and migration, did not move on fast enough from GCSE work. Nevertheless, one of these lessons attempted to make learning interesting, by getting students to empathise with the plight of migrants; it certainly made them think. A lesson about the 1993 Mississippi floods did not explore the significance of the river's drainage pattern in depth, but students were not allowed to give superficial answers about the way the levees were breached.

161. The teacher who delivers the physical geography units is aware that students find plate tectonics and meteorology difficult. He has written helpful introduction booklets. However, students certainly have the ability to tackle these topics well and there is much stimulating material available on the Internet and on video. Students understand the essential link between plate edges and earthquake and volcanic activity but find it hard to explain anomalies, or why rock type is determined by different types of plate movements.

162. Several GCSE courses do not cover meteorology, but this is no reason for students to struggle with the concepts. They do not appreciate the application of meteorology to their everyday lives enough, for example linking the television weather reports to satellite images, or data from the Meteorological Office. Whilst it is admirable to encourage students to do research and present their findings to the class, as they often merely copy chunks from a basic textbook and regurgitate them, learning is not advanced, even if it is undertaken in a good humoured atmosphere. After one student's brief presentation about the weathering process of carbonation, the teacher's comments did not clarify the dominant limestone features that are formed, but diverted into a discussion about eutrophication. Students have an excellent basic textbook, but they need to discuss, methodically, all the fundamentals in lessons.

163. Teaching is good overall but it is rarely inspirational or exciting. The teaching styles students experience, described above, all have particular strengths, but also features that may contribute to some students not attaining the highest grades. Photocopies stuck in their folders suggest they do not practice drawing diagrams enough. In

contrast students are given very helpful revision summaries, and they use highlighter pens effectively to focus on key points in articles and diagrams. They tackle many past examination papers and comment that they find this practice good. Students are introduced to advanced ways of presenting information, but one group had used the axes of log graph paper the wrong way round to display the rank size rule.

164. Although students do not always have good examples of all the required physical features at their fingertips, they learn a great deal on the residential field trip in Year 12, and teachers skilfully weave, and regularly refer to examples from this in later work. This is very good practice. The quality of understanding, and written work, that emerges from the residential and day fieldwork is very high, and worthwhile. During the inspection, there was little evidence that students use ICT enough for research and information. Students can draw and interpret most graphs and statistical data accurately but when they have completed one, further examples are not done using appropriate software, which is quicker.

165. Leadership and management are satisfactory, although no benefits from the department being part of the humanities faculty were apparent during the inspection. Students' marks for the different examination papers are analysed, and adjustments are made. However, baseline data, such as students' average GCSE points score, is not used to set them AS- and A-level targets. These could be valuable, for example for those Year 13 students who attained below grade C marks in the 2001 AS. A couple of the geography rooms are visually depressing, as the walls have withered relief maps, reminiscent of a fifties classroom, no satellite or aerial images and little work done by students.

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **very good.**

Strengths
- Improved and well above average A-level results.
- Very good teaching encourages outstanding learning and it gives students the skills and confidence to work independently.
- The subject is becoming more popular.
- Students apply their very good analytical skills and grasp of concepts very well.

Areas for improvement
- Assessment data are not always used fully to set students specific and effective targets.
- Teaching styles are not shared enough through professional dialogue.
- ICT is not used systematically and regularly.

166. Performance at A-level has been well above the national average for the past three years. The high standards at the time of last inspection have been improved further. In 2001 over 70 per cent of students attained A/B grades. AS marks show that over 80 per cent of students attained A/B grades. This is due to very good teaching and careful analysis of any weaknesses in students' performance, as soon as they occur. In 2000 female students attained very high grades but in 2001 male students did better.

167. Present standards continue to be well above average. In a group activity on the development of the Labour Party in 1924, students demonstrated analytical and evaluative skills of a very high standard. Essay work on the relative strength of the House of Commons and the Lords, and women's suffrage, shows how well students develop their own viewpoints and cite relevant data to support them. Students work very hard taking responsibility for their learning by reading and researching topics, such

as the life of Cavour and that of Napoleon III. They use historical methods effectively to assess the influence that individuals have upon the period they are studying in the synoptic paper.

168. Students draw on, use confidently, and evaluate a wide range of primary and secondary sources, for example, considering St Simone's views and those of Victor Hugo on Napoleon III's socialist leanings. They select a wide range of sources for their coursework, such as an Irish history magazine to study the effects of the potato famine. They present detailed and complex arguments about historical motive and interpretation, seen in work on the clash between Cavour and Garibaldi, and in their speech preparation for a debate on the growth of the Labour Party.

169. Students know that history gives them an excellent basis on which to build a variety of careers, and appreciate how it supports their research skills and aspirations to study, for example law or archaeology, at university. Teachers give students very good advice about the work to be undertaken, about reading and about other resources available. Not enough use is made of history Internet sites. Students who join the school in the sixth form, particularly female ones, feel very well supported.

170. Students make very good progress. Essays on the decline of Liberalism and the Conservative domination of post-war Britain show students' clear thinking and very good writing skills. These result from some very good teaching and from students' commitment to study, their independent work at home and the clear notes they write on source reading. They find the magazines they can use for project work very helpful. Teaching is very good and it was excellent in a lesson on Italian Unification. Whilst students work productively, occasionally activities lack intellectual rigour, for example when project work is discussed in class. Lack of pace in a lesson about Balfour meant there was too little time for students to contribute their ideas, and in a lesson where the teacher led a discussion on Napoleon III, a few students were not given challenging enough tasks.

171. Teaching is very good, as is teachers' subject knowledge. Lesson objectives are clear, and planned to develop students' skills and interest. Students' individual needs, especially the few who the teacher acknowledges are underachieving, are not always focused on enough. Teachers manage group work and discussions well and their questions are perceptive and open-ended. Students read widely, one made very good use of such research to challenge the class's interpretation of Cavour's views on the peasantry. Teachers encourage students to take an active part in lessons by setting up small groups to analyse documentary sources. This worked very well when students assessed the provenance and reliability of sources relating to Cavour's part in Italian Unification. Homework and revision classes after school certainly help students. Teachers use videos and tapes but some of them are out of date, particularly the 1960s tapes.

172. The subject is well led and the head of department engenders close working between the enthusiastic, experienced and well-qualified teachers. There is not enough transparent target setting and record keeping, linked to national and school based value-added data, to raise standards for a few students. It is clear that students use ICT for research, but not enough in lessons. Assessment procedures are good, leaving most students in no doubt about how to improve their work at every stage, and engendering high expectations. The accommodation is satisfactory, although one teacher has to use a mobile classroom some distance from the department. Wall displays are good in some areas and satisfactory in others – one room has a good display of Year 12 work.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French were examined in depth, and one lesson and students' work in German was also looked at. A group of fourteen Year 13 students are studying for the Cambridge Certificate in **Japanese**, a course which has been running for eight years. Three former students are studying Japanese at university and another lives and teaches in Japan. No Japanese teaching was seen during the inspection.

Standards in **German** are very high. A-level results in 2001 were well above average, all nine students attained A/B grades. In the lesson seen, students watched a video with English subtitles, prior to reading the novel it was based on. Teaching was satisfactory, but several students did not contribute to the discussion as they viewed the video with any directed focus. Although this teaching could have been more effective, scrutiny of work, discussion with students and study of results provided ample evidence that teaching makes a very positive contribution to students' achievement.

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

Strengths
- Very high standards generated by teachers' excellent knowledge and enthusiasm.
- Students who are highly motivated and keen to respond in lessons.
- The efficient management of the subject.

Areas for improvement
- In some groups teacher direction is too much and student interaction too little.
- The somewhat limited contribution the department makes to the school's extra-curricular programme. Drama, in the sixth form as well as the main school, is not well developed.

173. The popularity and success of A-level English literature have increased considerably since the last inspection. The improvement began in 1998. Numbers taking the examination in 2000 and 2001 were double those of previous years, an increase that is not entirely due to the expansion in the sixth form and the entry of girls. Results were very high, more than double the national average, with 80 per cent of students attaining A/B grades. This subject is now one of the most successful A-level subjects. Students often choose it because they have enjoyed the subject at GCSE level, where all take English literature and achieve outstanding results. The department of five English specialists, all of whom have been appointed since September 2000, are committed to maintaining these very high standards. Work seen during the inspection indicates that they will do so. AS-level has been introduced successfully. Over 40 students took the examination in 2001 and 76 per cent attained A/B marks.

174. Work seen during the inspection week confirms these very high standards and indicates first-rate achievement. Students enjoy their study of literary texts, and their essays show developing skill and confidence in critical interpretation and analysis. Some very high quality writing was seen in both years. Students show that they work hard to achieve high standards in the examination without losing their lively individual approach and pleasure in the books they study. This was evident in a vigorous discussion of 'A Streetcar Named Desire' in Year 12, when students showed keen awareness of some key features of the play and were able to pinpoint lines or passages to support their arguments. A well-directed class exploration of Browning's 'My Last Duchess' elicited some perceptive and illuminating comments from students, who made good links with other poems and periods.

175. Although well planned discussions and student presentations were seen in most of the eight lessons observed, there was a surprising lack of interaction. Students often read out their prepared material to the teacher, and seldom questioned or challenged each other. Consequently, their ideas and opinions were not often exposed to the cut and thrust of argument, though the quality of their writing shows that they have much to give and gain in such interchanges. Students' reading aloud, particularly of poetry and scenes or speeches from Shakespeare, was also disappointing, and a poor match for the lively and perceptive response to the lines they usually showed in discussion. A similar weakness when reading Shakespeare was noted in the main school. There is a lack of emphasis to target and improve students' reading and acting skills in earlier years so that by the sixth form they can give vivid life and meaning to the texts they share in class.

176. A-level English is taught well. Students greatly value the teachers' expertise and enthusiasm; several of them mentioned the quality of teaching as a factor which had led them to choose the subject. The lesson styles also have particular appeal, allowing, as one student put it: 'space for sideways thinking'. During the inspection, the best lessons were when students sat around a large table, seminar style. When they were sitting in rows facing the teacher, the possibility of good interaction was limited and there was overuse of question and answer between the teacher and individual students.

177. Teachers prepare carefully, know the texts and historical periods well and have high expectations. They encourage students to read widely around the syllabus and make good use of their own wider reading to give breadth and context to work on set books. The assessment of work is a particular strength and some exemplary marking was seen in students' files. Most students are very conscientious about meeting requirements and deadlines. They make good use of the resources available to them, including ICT, the Internet and the well-stocked school library, hence their learning is very good.

178. Extra-curricular opportunities include visits to the theatre. In the week before the inspection a number of students saw 'Othello' in London and they discussed the production in class. They also benefit from the numerous sixth-form theatre trips organised by a member of the modern foreign languages department. Outside the lessons, teachers are available to students for advice and support. Year 12 students organize a regular debating club that meets during lunchtime. There is, nevertheless, an overall lack of extra-curricular activities. Drama is a neglected area, in the sixth form as in the main school, and it is rightly a target in the department's current development plan. Parents and students mentioned the lack of drama opportunities, despite the recent highly successful musical production and a smaller scale Year 8 performance. A sixth-form student remembered a production of a Beckett play some years ago and regretted the loss of such productions. More use of drama methods, dramatic readings and even small-scale performances of Shakespeare would improve the rather limited reading skills noted in this inspection.

179. The courses are well organised. Analysis of data is well used to predict grades and to assess learning and progress. The department is in an unusual situation in that none of the five teachers, including two newly qualified ones appointed in September 2001, have been at the school for more than four terms. The small team is well led and collaborating effectively to maintain and improve standards attained in English. The greatly increased take up of A-level English is both a tribute to the department, and a challenge that they are eager to meet.

Overall, the quality of provision in French is **very good**.

Strengths
- Well above average standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
- Teaching often inspires students to participate actively.
- Extra-curricular opportunities are good.
- The subject contributes well to students' moral, social and cultural education.

Areas for improvement
- The limited occasions when different, and good teaching styles are shared.
- The lack of any value-added system to track students' progress.

180. A-level results have remained well above average, and in 2000 they were very high. Seven out of fourteen students attained A grades, and five attained B grades. In 2001 over 80 per cent of students attained A/B grades. The numbers studying French have been below fifteen since 1998, but presently there are 18 A-level and 24 AS students; three female students took A-level in 2001. French is more popular than German but for both languages it is hard to persuade students, particularly those studying mathematics, economics or the sciences, to choose it as a fourth AS.

181. Year 12 students use a variety of tenses and complex sentences very well, at a standard that is already considerably beyond GCSE. In Year 13 their written work is usually at higher A-level grade standards. In both years most students speak French confidently, fluently and accurately in interviews and discuss complex intellectual issues. For example, a group of students spoke effectively about the way the songs of Edith Piaf illustrate the stresses and strains of living in Paris during the Nazi occupation. All students achieve highly.

182. Standards are very high because the very good teaching is often inspired and encourages students to have high expectations. While there were occasional examples of lessons being too dominated by the teacher, it was clear from scrutiny of their work and interviews with students, that they are exposed to a wide variety of different learning styles. These are particularly effective for Year 13 students, who are taught by three different teachers, all of whom have excellent subject knowledge. Highly fluent students sometimes overshadow the less confident, but pair or group work alleviates this problem in the best lessons. It is difficult to assess whether this is having an adverse effect on the achievement of relatively less confident students, as there is no effective value-added system of assessment.

183. When teaching is particularly effective, teachers make very good use of materials that support development from GCSE to A-level, and a variety of activities and learning styles are included in a single lesson. Teaching is just occasionally less effective when a few students do not take an active part. However, the subject supports students' moral, social and cultural development very well. The content of most lessons relates to interesting social and moral issues and confronts them in the context of the cultural values of a different country. Students delight in participating in lively debate and in the intellectual enjoyment derived from playing with the French language. Defending their reasons for reading different newspapers, students were intrigued by the convoluted French translation of 'That depends what it's about – Cela dépend de quoi il s'agit'.

184. Extra-curricular opportunities help students to learn well: Year 12 students can go on a work experience visit to France and both year groups attend A-level conferences in London twice a year. Students have a very positive attitude to the subject and contribute well in lessons. They complete homework exercises conscientiously and

these are marked regularly and helpfully. The department is well led by a relatively new head of department. Progress has been made on the issue identified in the last inspection of increasing student participation, and teaching and learning ideas are shared, but a lack of a sufficiently systematic approach to mutual observation inhibits the impact of shared good practice. Whilst practically all students achieve very well, the department does not monitor the progress of relatively weaker students closely enough.