

INSPECTION REPORT

RAVENS WOOD SCHOOL

Bromley, Kent

LEA area: Bromley

Unique reference number: 101669

Headteacher: Dr G Berwick

Lead inspector: Mr M Pavey

Dates of inspection: 11–14 October 2004

Inspection number: 268890

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11–19
Gender of pupils:	Male in Years 7–11, mixed in the sixth form.
Number on roll:	1422
School address:	Oakley Road, Bromley, Kent,
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Hillier
Date of previous inspection:	9 November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This comprehensive school for boys aged 11–18 is in Bromley, Kent. With a roll of 1422, the school is larger than average. There are 1150 boys in Years 7–11 and the sixth form of 272 includes 38 girls. Most students come from White heritage backgrounds, though there are small numbers from Mixed, Asian, Black, Chinese and other backgrounds. The percentage of students whose first language is not English is low and only four students are at an early stage in learning English as an additional language. The percentage of students having special educational needs (SEN) is 14 per cent, which is broadly average. The percentage of students with statements of SEN is 2.3 per cent, also broadly average. The percentage of those eligible for free school meals was 4.9 per cent in 2002-03 (below average), but rose to 6 per cent in 2003-04.

Students come from a range of social and economic backgrounds, though the surrounding areas are generally more advantaged than the average. The school population is relatively settled, with fewer students joining after Year 7 than the national average. Students' ability on entry, seen in the results of the tests taken at their previous schools, is just above average for the younger students. The level of ability has been rising in recent years, and the ability of students now in the GCSE years and sixth form was overall around the national average on entry to the school.

Since the last inspection, numbers have increased by some 250 students, and girls have joined the sixth form. The school continues to be a specialist Technology College and has become a Leading Edge school. It has also become the leading school in an Education Action Zone, and is now involved in the Leadership Strategy of the London Challenge, helping schools in challenging circumstances.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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33160	N Power	Team inspector	English, drama
28097	S Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics in Years 7–11
22691	R Woodhouse	Team inspector	Mathematics and physics in the sixth form
1779	D Leonard	Team inspector	Science in Years 7–11 Leisure & tourism and leisure & recreation in the sixth form
1782	A Lyons	Team inspector	Business education and information and communication technology (ICT) in the sixth form
4474	I Punter	Team inspector	Art and design
8552	W Hart	Team inspector	Design and technology
20497	V Williams	Team inspector	Geography and media studies in the sixth form
32852	A Edwards	Team inspector	Geography
10666	P Wheeler	Team inspector	History
16950	C Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
33711	M Hird	Team inspector	Physical education
18912	C Large	Team inspector	Religious education
31850	D Nevens	Team inspector	Music
33204	F Wright	Team inspector	Special educational needs
15075	B Goodman-Stephens	Team inspector	Citizenship English as an additional language
22031	I Knight	Team inspector	ICT

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school with some excellent features. Leadership and management from the headteacher and senior team are excellent. Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well. A leading feature of the school is its consistent quality. No subject or feature of the school is less than good and very few lessons are unsatisfactory. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Excellent leadership and management are reflected in first-rate systems for the assessment of work and for the management of staff performance and training.
- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE are well above average. At all stages, students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good in all years, so that students learn very well.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good, throughout the school.
- The curriculum is very good. Provision for activities is excellent.
- Arrangements for students' welfare are very good.
- The sixth form makes a very strong contribution to the life of the school. An outstanding feature is the opportunity for students to support the work of the school community.
- Not enough religious education (RE) is taught in Years 10 and 11.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory for the growing number of students, for sixth form private study, for social areas and for the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.
- The school's excellent contribution to the development of good standards in other schools and its work in the training of teachers greatly help the development of its own standards.
- There is no daily act of collective worship for all students.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with previous good standards well maintained. Improvement in the one key issue at the last inspection, the quality of provision for special educational needs, has been good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Note: Achievement answers the question, 'are standards for individual students high enough?' This means the level students have reached, based on the progress they have made in relation to how capable they are.

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

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

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

Achievement is very good, at all levels. All groups of students achieve very well, reflecting very good teaching and a very good curriculum, well suited to their needs. Results in examinations in 2003 were overall well above average in tests and examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11. Results are broadly average in the A2 examinations in the sixth form. Standards of work seen are

above the expected level. GCSE results in 2003, compared to those in similar schools, were well below average. This figure is compared with the results achieved by these students in their tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001. The same calculation made by the school for 2004, based on 2002 Year 9 tests and 2004 GCSE results, produces an A grade.

Standards of work seen during the inspection were at least above expected levels in all subjects and well above in many. In English and science, standards were well above expected levels, while in mathematics they were well above in Years 7-9 and above in Years 10-11. These high levels of attainment come from very good teaching and accurate assessment of students' potential performance. Across the curriculum, standards in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are also above expected levels.

Students have very good attitudes to their school and each other. Their behaviour is very good. Relationships are very good also. **Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.** Attendance is well above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a very good quality of education. Teaching is very good, so that students learn very well. Teachers' regular assessment of students' work is good. The curriculum is very good and has a number of excellent features, for example the provision for activities. Provision for welfare and guidance is very good. Students are given excellent advice, support and guidance.

Links with parents and the local community are very good. Links with other schools and colleges at home and abroad are excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher and senior staff give excellent leadership, reflected in excellent management of the school's many central systems. Governance is very good in most respects, but governors have not ensured that statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11, and for a daily act of collective worship, have been met.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students are pleased with the education the school provides. The school has developed a very good partnership with its parents, who have considerable confidence in the school and what it offers.

In their questionnaires, parents' views were very positive. Almost all the 197 responding thought their children were making good progress and behaved well. They felt the teaching was good and were comfortable in approaching the school. The school was well led and students treated fairly. A minority felt it was not well informed about how students were getting on. Inspectors have found that the assessment and reporting systems are very strong.

Students in Years 7–11 feel that this is a good school to be at and that they are well taught and are expected to work hard. A large minority feels that behaviour does not meet its expectations, although inspectors have found it very good. A majority feels that there is bullying in the school, but inspectors have found that it is well handled when it arises. Sixth form students are generally positive about the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve is:

- Improve accommodation where it is unsatisfactory, particularly for sixth form private study, for social areas and for the teaching of ICT across the curriculum.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide sufficient RE in Years 10 and 11.
- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.

SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides a very good quality of education. It is very cost-effective. Standards attained in AS and A2 examinations were overall in line with the national average in 2003 and rose further in 2004. Students' achievement is good and the standards of work seen are above expected levels. Teaching is very good, so that students learn very well. Leadership and management given by sixth form staff are very good. Standards described in the last inspection report have been well maintained.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school's overall excellent leadership and management are reflected in first-rate systems for the assessment of work and for the management of staff performance and training in the sixth form.
- The sixth form makes a very strong contribution to the life of the school.
- Teaching is very good, so that students learn very well.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- The curriculum is very good. Provision for activities is excellent.
- Arrangements for students' welfare are very good.
- Sixth form accommodation is unsatisfactory for the growing number of students, particularly for private study and social areas, and for easy access to ICT equipment.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	English. Very good. Standards are well above average and students' achievement is very good. Teaching is good. French. Good. Standards are average. Teaching is very good and students achieve very well.
Mathematics	Mathematics. Very good. Teaching is very good, and students achieve well. Relationships are excellent, and standards are improving.
Science	Physics. Good. Teaching is good and standards are rising. Students achieve well. There is a significant increase in the number of students.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	ICT. Very good. Standards are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good, and students achieve very well.
Humanities	Geography. Very Good. Teaching and learning are very good, leading to very good achievement.

	History. Very good. Teaching is very good, so that achievement is very good also.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Product design. Very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Students achieve very well.
Visual and performing arts and media	Media Studies. Very Good. Standards are very high. Teaching and learning are very good. Students achieve very well.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Leisure and tourism. Very good. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
Business	Business education. Very good. Results are good. Teaching is very good and students achieve very well.
<i>The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.</i>	

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Sixth form students receive excellent advice and guidance, both before they join and during their time in Years 12 and 13. Guidance follows a similar pattern to that in the main part of the school. This gives students confidence to persevere with their studies, as shown by very high proportion which remains on courses throughout these two years. Arrangements to involve them in the life of the school are very good. The school gives them considerable opportunities for leadership, for example in helping those with English as an additional language. Sixth formers feel that they play an active and useful part.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is very well led. Programmes led by senior staff, for example for the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the evaluation of students' progress, are of the same high quality as in the main school. Management is very good also, for example in the direction of the teams of tutors and the programme of careers events and visiting speakers. An excellent aspect of management is the strong integration of sixth form students in the life of the whole school, to the benefit of all.

Financial management of the sixth form is very good, and supports a wide curriculum and generous programme of activities. Income is higher than expenditure, so that sixth form funding makes a reasonable contribution to the school's central costs.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students interviewed during the inspection were generally pleased with the courses and guidance they received. In their questionnaire responses, students were pleased with the quality of teaching and assessment. Their teachers were accessible and helpful, and students were treated fairly. They felt the school was well run. Most felt that they could turn to an adult who knew them well and that there was a good range of extra activities. Though most agreed, a quarter disagreed that they had helpful advice on joining the sixth form and that they receive well informed careers advice. Inspectors consider that the quality of information given is excellent.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Note:

Attainment answers the question, 'how high are standards?' This means the actual standards students have reached, when compared with the national average in tests and examinations. It is also used to explain the average level expected nationally on entry to the school, or the level of work seen during an inspection.

Achievement answers the question, 'are standards for individual students high enough?' This means the level students have reached, based on the progress they have made in relation to how capable they are.

Results in examinations are overall well above the national average in tests and examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11. They are broadly average in the A2 examinations in the sixth form. Standards of work seen are above the expected level. Over their time in the school, students achieve very well; they make very good gains in knowledge and understanding. All groups of students achieve very well, reflecting very good teaching and a very good curriculum, well suited to their needs.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results were well above the national average in the tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003.
- In GCSE, results for students attaining five or more grades A*-C were well above average in 2003. They were average for attainment across the whole range of grades A*-G.
- Standards of work seen during the inspection were at least above expected levels in all subjects and well above in many.
- Results in the A2 examinations taken at the end of Year 13 were in line with the national average in points scored in 2003.
- Students' achievement and progress in lessons are very good.

Commentary

1. When students now in Years 10-13 entered the school, their attainment was in line with the nationally expected level. Students now in Years 7-9 are overall above this level. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, results in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science were overall well above average. Results have been at this high level for several years and have risen faster than the trend in results nationally. Results were higher in mathematics and science than in English. Results rose further again in 2004; the school has received confirmation of its 2004 results, which are overall very high in relation to the national average. While results in 2003 confirmed satisfactory achievement over Years 7-9, those calculated by the school for 2004 indicate very good achievement over this period.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.1(38.0)	33.4(33.3)
mathematics	38.3(38.3)	35.4(34.7)
science	36.6(35.3)	33.6(33.3)

There were 222 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Attainment for five or more grades A*-C in GCSE in 2003 was well above average, and close to average for five or more grades A*-G. Overall, GCSE results in 2003 were well above average. Over their two years of GCSE study, these students made below average achievement and progress. GCSE results improved further in 2004. The school's calculations indicate very good achievement for the students who took GCSE this year.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	70 (72)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91(93)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	38.7(39.3)	34.7(34.8)

There were 195 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Standards of work seen during the inspection were at least above expected levels in all subjects and well above in many. In English and science, standards were well above expected levels, while in mathematics they were well above in Years 7-9 and above in Years 10-11. These high levels of attainment come from very good teaching and accurate assessment of students' potential performance. Across the curriculum, standards in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are also above expected levels. Students approach their work with confidence because they have been given good basic skills and can apply these well to new work.
- Achievement in lessons and work seen during the inspection was, overall, very good. It was excellent in design and technology, very good in English and science, and good in mathematics. Generally in lessons seen, students made very good gains in knowledge and understanding. All groups of students, including the higher and lower attainers, those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, achieved very well, reflecting very good teaching and a curriculum well suited to their needs.
- The school has set itself challenging but realistic targets for performance in tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE. It exceeded its 2004 targets for tests by a wide margin, especially in science, and results were in line with GCSE performance. On its performance in 2004, the school is well placed to achieve its 2005 targets.
- Improvement has been good since the last inspection. The school has maintained and further improved its performance in tests and examinations since the previous report, which itself confirmed improvement since the previous inspection. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003, results were higher than when last reported in mathematics and science, and around the previous level in English. Results have risen considerably in GCSE examinations. Standards of work seen remain well above average and achievement remains very good.

Attainment and achievement in the sixth form

- Combined results in 2003 for AS and A2 examinations were overall in line with the national average. Boys attained higher results than girls in AS examinations, but lower in A2. The overall average points score was lower in 2003 than 2002. However, performance in the top grades A and B, and in all pass grades A-E improved in 2004, with the A-E pass rate, at 98 per cent, well above the national figure for 2003. The school has calculated considerable value added for the 96 students who joined the school in Year 7 and took A2 examinations in 2004. 81 per cent of these students exceeded their predicted grades. Excellent results have been achieved in media studies.

8. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average and, in the great majority of subjects inspected, students were achieving very well. Achievement was very good during the inspection in English, ICT, geography, media studies, product design and business education.
9. Examination results have declined from the levels reported in 1998, but the very good achievement then reported has been well maintained.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes to the school and standards of behaviour are both very good, as is personal development. Attendance is well above average and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relations between students and teachers are very good and contribute to students' very good overall achievement and personal development.
- Students come to school prepared to work hard and do well.
- Students behave very well.
- Provision for students' moral and social development is very strong across the school.
- Levels of attendance are well above average.

Commentary

10. Students' attitudes to the school are very good. They are keen to learn and expect to do well. There is a general culture of hard work, leading to good individual achievement. A key factor here is the very precise knowledge that students have of their levels of work, of how well they are doing and exactly what they should work at in order to do better. This ability to evaluate their own learning is something the school seeks to impart – and it receives a very positive response. Students like the very wide range of activities on offer and take part enthusiastically. Relations between students and teachers are very good and contribute to overall achievement. Students interviewed value these very good relations. They also appreciate the way the school works as an inclusive community.
11. Standards of behaviour in the school are very good. In lessons, students behave very well and work purposefully. They are aware of the high standards they are expected to maintain. On the very rare occasions when some students lack interest in the lesson and standards of behaviour dip, they respond to careful management. Students also behave very well as they move around the school between lessons, at break and at lunchtime. The dining hall gets very crowded, but remains orderly and good humoured. Students interviewed acknowledge that bullying can happen, but were confident that cases would be reported and dealt with promptly. Levels of exclusion, both permanent and fixed term, are lower than average.
12. One of the school's aims – and central to its philosophy – is the development of good citizens, aware of their moral and social responsibilities. In this it meets with considerable success. Students' personal development is very good overall. The moral and social aspects of both the provision (what the school does) and the response (how students react) are very effective. The provision extends right across the school. It is found in the way that students are expected to be interested in a wide range of studies and topical issues, and to be able to evaluate their interest, effort and potential to do better. It is implicit in the way they behave themselves and help others, whether in the school or outside through their charitable work. The very good relations and trust between students and their teachers make a significant contribution here too. Provision for students' spiritual development, although good, is less strong. Despite the high quality of contributions at a general level and from some subject departments, opportunities to develop spiritual awareness can be missed. Moreover, the routine of a 'thought for the day' is not always observed. Cultural provision is good, and often very good. The school does well by bringing cultural events to the school, but could take students to a more

varied range of events, especially multi-cultural ones. Overseas contacts are very good, however, and a very effective way of extending students' cultural horizons.

13. The attitudes and behaviour of students with special education needs and those who have English as an additional language are good. The student development department is very successful at enabling students at risk of exclusion to be integrated into school by providing relevant and useful courses, for example with the help of the school's *Connexions* personal adviser.

Attendance

14. Attendance for the academic year 2002/2003 was well above the average for all schools, at 93.3 per cent. Figures for the year 2003/2004 are very similar. The amount of unauthorised absence is lower than the national figure and fell again last year. These levels have been maintained over several years and have a favourable impact on how well boys do at the school. Punctuality is also good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.3	School data	0.5
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – any other mixed background

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1193	28	2
17	1	0
2	2	0
19	2	1

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

Attitudes, values and other personal qualities sixth form

15. Sixth form students share the same very good attitudes to their studies that are found in the main school and many bring an additional maturity to their work. Their behaviour is sensible and responsible. Students respond very well to the extra demands made of them, and to the many opportunities given them to exercise leadership in the main school. As a result, they are very involved in the work of the main school – for example as prefects, 'buddies' with Year 7 or helping in lessons as part of their community service. Their presence is visible and very beneficial. They are very smartly turned out and polite, and are very good role models for younger students.
16. Records show rates of attendance for the current year to be good, though figures for the previous academic year were not available for comparison. Overall, punctuality is satisfactory,

though some students arrive late at the start of the day. Attendance is recorded and monitored efficiently.

17. The high standards noted in the previous inspection report have been maintained.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching is very good, so that students learn very well. Teachers' day-to-day assessment of students' work is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. The curriculum is very good and has a number of excellent features. Care and welfare are very good, and advice based on the monitoring of performance is excellent. Links with parents and the local community are very good. Links with other schools and colleges at home and abroad are excellent.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is very good, overall and in most subjects. As a result, students learn very well, make very good progress and achieve very good results. Very good teaching is the basis of students' very positive behaviour and attitudes. Teachers' regular assessment of students' work is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very effective and students learn very well.
- Across all subjects, teaching is never less than good, and is often very good.
- Teacher's regular assessment of students' work is good – very good in the sixth form.
- Teachers make very good use of the school's systems for assessment and target setting.
- The school's overall system for assessment provides students with high expectations of success, and helps to fulfil them.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 191 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
11 (6%)	84 (44%)	65 (34%)	28 (15%)	3 (1%)	0	0

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

18. Teaching is very good, both in Years 7–9 and 10–11. In lessons seen, there was very little unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is a little stronger in Years 10–11, where there is more very good and excellent teaching than in Years 7–9. Because teaching is very good, students learn very well.
19. Teachers have a very good command of their subjects. This allows them to teach with high expectations and very good challenge. They plan their lessons very well and engage their students ably. As a result, students want to learn, apply themselves with confidence and acquire new skills and knowledge readily. Teachers insist on very high standards of behaviour, and students respond by working very productively, on their own and with each other. Teachers use time and resources well, though sometimes the long double lesson makes it hard to keep up the initial momentum. Teachers and assistants work well together, and assistants make a good contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers use homework well; in most cases, it is well set and marked. Teachers' use of ICT is variable, because it is not always easy to get access to equipment. When computers are readily

available, as in mathematics, teachers use them well and students benefit from regular practice.

20. The strength of teaching and learning lies in its reliability. In no subject is teaching less than good, and in a majority it is very good. The result of the school's very careful training and evaluation of all its staff is the confidence that teachers will teach well and students learn effectively. This makes attendance worthwhile – necessary if the student is to keep pace – and good attitudes something which staff and students can assume. Little time is wasted on establishing control. Students expect to learn and are rightly offended if a teacher is not well enough prepared to make good use of the lesson, which happened rarely during the inspection week.
21. Teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is good overall. In English, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers set demanding tasks, structuring lessons clearly and checking continually that progress is being made. Students learn very well because most teachers ensure that lessons are calm and purposeful. Marking is thorough and targets for improvement are clear. In mathematics, teaching is also good. Relationships are very good and teachers help students achieve their best. Younger students learn well because teachers have high expectations of them, while older students have a high motivation to do well. The best lessons are carefully structured and enhance thinking skills. Mathematics teachers do not always plan learning outcomes or assess them precisely enough. In science, teaching and learning are very good. Teachers plan varied lessons which engage students' interest. As a result of regular reinforcement, most students have a good grasp of key scientific terms. Higher attaining students in some groups are not always well enough challenged. Marking in exercise books is variable and often does not show students what they should do to improve.
22. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good and as a result, good progress is made in most lessons. Support from experienced learning support assistants and tutors is effective and in many cases very good. Individual education plans (IEPs) are well planned and address specific targets effectively. They are widely used across the school. However, they need to be carefully evaluated to allow for progression. Teaching of gifted and talented students is very effective, partly because the curriculum is designed to provide for top sets, partly because teachers provide a very good programme of extra activities which such students can join.
23. Students learning English as an additional language learn well. They rapidly gain in confidence and communication skills. Teachers from the local support service and the school provide them with very good teaching and resources. They use a range of techniques to encourage confidence and progress, for example the very good use of mime and gesture to clarify the meaning of unknown words. Teachers know the specific learning needs of these students well.
24. Teachers' day-to-day assessment of students' work is good. Marking is generally well done, though there are examples of scanty marking and a lack of comment on how to improve. The school has adopted the six-week cycle of work as the main period of assessment, and assessment at the end of the cycle is thorough and helpful. Targets set at the start of the cycle are reviewed against performance, progress judged and new targets set. This process is very well known to students and parents. Students are aware that not every piece of work will be marked under this system, but teachers need to be on guard against untidy exercise books and a lack of care in some work seen, which come from a relatively extended period of assessment.
25. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning has been well maintained and has further improved overall. Though there is not so much excellent teaching as previously reported, the amount of very good teaching has further increased. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching has been much reduced. The good quality of day-to-day assessment has been maintained and systems for regular assessment further developed.

Teaching and learning in the sixth form

26. Teaching and learning are very good. Virtually all teaching seen was at least good, and very good teaching was the most frequent quality seen. In no lessons were teaching and learning judged unsatisfactory. In nine of the 11 subjects inspected in detail, teaching was very good.
27. Assessment is very good at this level also. Teachers mark students' work with care and attention to detail. The school's six weekly cycle of assessment, review and target setting continues in the sixth form. It is used with accuracy to assess progress, agree ways to improve standards and propose suitably challenging courses in further and higher education.
28. Very good standards of teaching and learning have been maintained since the last inspection report. Assessment in the sixth form was not separately reported in 1998.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good. There are a number of excellent features such as the care taken to ensure that all students are following an appropriate curriculum, and provision for enrichment across the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school curriculum is designed to cater for the needs of all students; it provides excellent opportunities for learning.
- The school ensures there is very good progression for students from Year 6 to Year 7.
- There is excellent provision for enrichment across the curriculum.
- Statutory requirements in religious education in Years 10–11, and for providing a daily act of collective worship, are not fully met.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good.

Commentary

29. Very good leadership and detailed planning provide a curriculum relevant to the needs of every student. This results in very good access, opportunity and inclusion for students of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of attainment. Two leading ideas have shaped this flexible, generous curriculum. First, the school provides learning through three main routes. These are the taught curriculum, enrichment activities, and the 'informal' curriculum such as the internet. Effective co-ordination of overall provision results in very good opportunities for learning. Second, very careful analysis of the attainment of students entering Year 7 places them in one of four groups of ability. The content of the curriculum for each subject is then designed for the range of aptitude within each group, enabling teachers to challenge higher attaining students and give extra support for students with learning difficulties.
30. Provision for personal development, citizenship, and careers education and guidance begins as early as Year 6 through the school's good links with partner primary schools. Provision for personal and social education is very good. It is covered, along with citizenship, as part of the morning tutorial sessions and through the 'action days', which end the regular six-weekly cycles. Planning and coordination are both very good. Topics are well chosen, with good progression of subject matter as students move up the school. Links across the curriculum are also very good. All students gain experience of the workplace through two weeks of work experience in Year 10.
31. The curriculum for students with special educational needs is good. The support given allows these students to gain access to all areas of the curriculum. It designs individual programs geared to students' strengths and capabilities. Those with the lowest literacy levels follow a very well taught program of literacy support, on a withdrawal basis. Following a successful joint

project last year to improve teaching and learning for students with special needs in the mathematics department, a similar project has been set up in science. In Years 10–11, lower-attaining students can choose a vocational course in leisure and tourism, and can qualify for the Youth Achievement Award. They take additional classes in English and mathematics to improve their confidence with literacy and numeracy. In science, students can select the applied science option, a more appropriate course for some students. There is also the opportunity for participation in the Sports Leadership Awards. Students who are likely to underachieve, for example those on the C/D borderline, have extra tuition including a residential visit to enhance their self-esteem. A similar programme is provided for the more able.

32. There is good provision within subjects for gifted and talented students, through the school's setting system and the many activities which departments provide. The new, accelerated group in Year 9 studies a restricted range of nine subjects, aiming for the higher grades of A* and A in GCSE in Year 10, a very good initiative for these able students. Curriculum arrangements for Years 10–11 allow higher-attaining students to take GCSE mathematics in Year 10, and also study a second foreign language and English literature.
33. In Years 7 to 9, all the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are met. Religious education is now about to be provided for the accelerated group in Year 9, though during the inspection a regular weekly lesson was not provided for them. In Years 10–11, the school does not wholly cover the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, and so does not meet requirements. Although many aspects of personal development are taught through tutorial activities and action days, there is not enough teaching about the range of faiths and beliefs across the world. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all students, as required.
34. Opportunities for enrichment are excellent. Students of all ages are provided with a very wide range of activities, both inside formal teaching time, and also as extra-curricular activities. There is a very large number of visits which increase students' understanding of their work and help to relate learning to the world outside school. There is an excellent programme of residential visits, beginning early in Year 7, supporting the development of self-esteem and confidence. As students move through the school, chances increase to visit other countries. Such visits illustrate teachers' commitment to providing a rich experience. Students' participation in activities is excellent, particularly in sport, where standards are very high.
35. Overall, provision of staffing is good. It is very good in science, geography, religious education, design technology, physical education, and media studies. There is a number of teachers now training on the Graduate Training Programme in English, who generally make a positive contribution to the work of the department. Overall, there is a good match of qualifications to the needs of the curriculum, providing the basis for students to achieve well. The match of support staff to the needs of the curriculum is also good. It is particularly effective in design and technology, and English. Support for teaching is inadequate in art because of a lack of time. In ICT, good links with primary schools includes the provision of technical support.
36. Overall, accommodation for teaching is satisfactory. There is good accommodation for religious education, special educational needs, physical education, art and mathematics. Accommodation for geography and modern foreign languages is very good and is excellent for design and technology. It is unsatisfactory in business studies. Recreational areas for students are very limited. Social accommodation for sixth form students is unattractive; their canteen and space for private study are inadequate. The school hall is much overused. The school is very clean and free of litter. The buildings and site are very well maintained.
37. Provision of resources is good. Textbooks are generally of very good quality. There is a restricted range of books in the learning resource centre, but ICT provision has improved there. The librarian provides useful advice for individual students. Access to computers is good in most subjects, for instance in mathematics and music. However, there is insufficient use of ICT in business studies, which restricts learning styles, and ICT resources are inadequate in

art. There is also good access to computers for students outside normal lessons. Interactive whiteboards are effectively used in science and mathematics. Display of students' work enhances corridors and classrooms, and is particularly good in geography. The very good resources in design and technology are carefully and effectively used.

38. Improvement in the curriculum has been good since the previous inspection. It has become even more innovative and flexible.

The curriculum in the sixth form

39. The sixth form curriculum is very good. It meets the needs of all students very well. It provides a wide range of AS Level and A2 level courses, opportunities for vocational education and important GCSE courses. Additionally, there are courses in A-level general studies, IT essentials and computer networking. There is a programme of work experience for Year 12, guidance on employment opportunities and on applications to higher education.
40. There are good systems for supporting students with special educational needs. Students have some access to religious education on activity and theme days, for example the Holocaust day and in visits to significant places such as Rome. The school has improved its provision in this way, but this arrangement does not fully meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus.
41. Students have excellent opportunities to develop interests outside the taught day, through an exceptional variety of sports and competitive games. Participation in these activities is very high. The school provides clubs in many subjects and areas of interest. A very wide range of visits is organised. Very good opportunities exist to pursue music at all levels, from the school choir to performing orchestras and ensembles of the highest standard. Many opportunities exist for students to work within the school community. Staff give their time generously to make this an outstanding feature of the school's work.

Care, guidance and support

Standards of care are high. Students are given excellent advice, support and guidance. Arrangements to involve them in the work of the school are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students receive excellent support and guidance.
- The year teams know their students very well and provide high standards of care.
- Students are very well involved in reviewing their work.

Commentary

42. Overall, standards of care, welfare, health and safety are very good.
43. Standards of care and welfare are very good because the year teams know their students and look after them very well. Here again, the very good relations between students and teachers make an important contribution. Health education has a high priority, taught especially through the action days, which are partly reserved for personal and social education. Good child protection procedures are in place. While safety procedures are generally good, testing of electrical equipment is needed in science. This was drawn to the attention of the school.
44. The academic and personal support and guidance that students receive are exceptionally well planned and integrated. The six-week cycle of work and reviews ensures that students' academic progress and their personal development are very efficiently recorded and monitored throughout the year. This means that any necessary corrective action is taken promptly. Since students themselves have an active part in the process, they know exactly what standards they have reached. They are also aware of what they must do to improve and how to do it. Their parents are kept informed too. And because each student has an individual folder, it is possible for everyone concerned to look at progress across the years. It is a very comprehensive system that helps students in the school to do as well as they can.

45. Detailed, effective arrangements enable students to take part in reviewing and evaluating their own work. In addition to this, the work of the leadership groups in the different years – akin to that of a school council – gives students an active voice in school life.
46. Care and support for students with special education needs are very good. There is a good ethos within the school of acceptance for SEN students. They feel secure and valued within the student development department, and are welcome when they come there for help, for example at break and lunchtimes. Good links exist with external agencies and guidance is sought appropriately. Across the curriculum, the school monitors the attainment and achievement of those learning English as an additional language very well. Close attention is paid to individual education plans, so that these students receive the same high level of care as all other students.
47. The very good standards of care, guidance and welfare reported in the last inspection have been well maintained.

Care, guidance and support in the sixth form

48. Sixth form students receive excellent advice and guidance, both before they join and during their time in Years 12 and 13. This was acknowledged by students interviewed, though some admitted that despite preparation, the extra work expected came as a shock and the support was all the more valued. Students receive very effective advice and guidance during their time in the Sixth Form, which follows a similar pattern to that in the main part of the school. This gives them confidence to persevere with their studies, as shown by very high proportion which remains on courses throughout these two years. Arrangements to involve them in the life of the school are very good, for example in helping those with English as an additional language. Sixth formers feel that they play an active and useful part.
49. Standards of care were already high in the previous inspection report and have been maintained. Support and guidance are even better now.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are very good. Links with the local community are very good. Links with other schools and colleges at home and abroad are excellent. The school makes effective use of its specialist school status to strengthen its partnerships.

Main Strengths and Weaknesses

- There is a very positive partnership with parents. Parents receive very good information about their children's progress and are pleased with the work of the school.
- Extensive links at national and international level make a very valuable contribution to education in general and to the development of the school.
- The school provides computer training, both for local residents and students in Soweto.
- Local organisations help to enrich the curriculum for students.

Commentary

50. The school has developed a very good partnership with its parents. They support the school's work, which in turn helps their children's learning. Parents have considerable confidence in the school and what it offers. In part, this confidence is derived from the information that the school gives parents: it is wide-ranging, easily accessible (on line and in paper form) and good. The information that parents receive about students' standards and progress is notable for its frequency and clarity. Parents, like students, can follow their sons' progress throughout their time at Ravens Wood because the combination of review days and reports makes the process a continuous one. As befits a technology college, increasing use is being made of modern

methods of producing these reports. The flourishing Parent/School Association is additional evidence of a strong partnership.

51. The school's links with the community are very good. It makes considerable use of local organisations to enrich the curriculum for students, for example on its 'action days'. The schools' extensive business links provide work experience placements for Year 10 students. The community involvement in work-related learning is also strong. There is provision for CISCO training for adults and school students. As part of this, students from Soweto are training to be IT instructors when they return home. As is required of specialist school, there are links with local schools: gap year students help with information technology support.
52. Excellent links have been developed with schools and training institutions around London, and overseas. The school willingly shares its expertise and this helps the personal development of current students and the professional development of its staff. The headteacher is the senior headteacher consultant for London Challenge Leadership Strategy and also works on school development programmes with the Specialist Schools Trust and with a university in Sweden. He and his staff share their expertise in leadership and management widely with schools in challenging circumstances. The school has given very effective professional training to the staff of schools with serious weaknesses; one such school was recently judged by Ofsted now to be a good school. Its membership of the South East of England Virtual Education Action Zone has enabled it to share expertise widely; one primary school in membership reports very positively on the improvements achieved through this partnership, especially by arranging for one of the gap year students to provide ICT expertise to this school. The school runs training courses for teachers, for example for those seeking advanced skills status. It has a well developed link with a secondary school in Canada, and as the result of this, its expertise is being shared across a whole province. The result of all these initiatives has been to refine the school's own training and management programmes, to the benefit of its staff and students.
53. There are very good links with parents of students with special educational needs. The opinion of parents is regularly sought, and they are kept regularly informed of their children's progress. A strong sense of partnership exists, and parents feel that the school addresses special educational needs very well. Visits are made to feeder primary schools to assist a smooth and effective transition for these students.
54. The very good partnerships described in the last inspection report have been well maintained and have increased in range and effectiveness.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher and senior staff give excellent leadership, reflected in excellent management of the school's many central systems. Governance is very good in most respects, but has one unsatisfactory aspect.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher gives very strong, committed leadership.
- Management of the curriculum, assessment, target setting, staff development and teacher training is excellent.
- Leadership and management of departments and years are at least good and often very good.
- Governors give well-informed, dedicated leadership. However, they have not ensured that religious education or a daily act of worship are provided for all students.

Commentary

55. The Governing Body continues to provide very good leadership. The chairman leads very well, ably supported by very good leadership by the chairmen of committees. Governors play an active role in shaping the vision and direction of the school, for example in their role in moving

the school to foundation status, technology college status and in the school's acquisition of 'Leading Edge' status also. Governors have a very clear grasp of the school's strengths, for example through their part in evaluating the development plan. They are also well aware of the shortcomings in the school's accommodation.

56. Governors have not ensured, though, that statutory requirements are met for the provision of sufficient religious education in Years 10 and 11. They have not ensured that a daily act of collective worship is provided, as required, for all students.
57. Leadership of the school is excellent. The headteacher provides great clarity of purpose and an excellent dedication to the school, its staff and students. Senior staff share his vision and high aspirations, reflected in their excellent leadership of the key programmes which ensure high standards of performance by staff and students, across the school. Leadership of teaching is innovative and very effective, resulting in very good overall standards of teaching, learning and behaviour. These come directly from the excellent sense of direction which leadership gives this large and ambitious school.
58. Management of the school's very well developed systems is excellent also. First-rate management has led to secure levels of performance in all areas, so that provision in all subjects is at least good and is overall very good. Very clear, effective systems for the evaluation of performance ensure that there are no weak areas in this school and many strengths. Performance data are very clearly analysed and converted into realistic but ambitious targets for the performance of subjects and individual students. All teachers have targets for their professional performance, clearly related to the aims of the school and reviewed every six weeks. The school year is firmly based on a six-week cycle of work, review, evaluation and target setting, so that everyone – staff, students, parents, senior management – knows exactly how much progress has been made, and whether it is sufficient. Excellent support is given to help students and staff reach targets, and a clearly understood 'traffic light' system indicates the quality of progress which students have made. The school development plan is well designed and comprehensive.
59. Provision for staff training and development is excellent. All teachers new to the school have to show enough promise in their first six weeks to gain admission to the school's very well organised programmes for professional development. The school provides training for aspirant 'advanced skills teachers' from a number of schools in the London area. It also provides effective training for teachers from overseas and for British graduates, in a wide range of disciplines. An extensive programme of training is presented at all times, with able coordination from the school's advanced skills teachers.
60. Senior management has closely reviewed the workloads of all teaching and support staff, providing extra training and resources as necessary. Support staff are well deployed, work well with teachers, and make a good contribution to the education provided. Provision of support staff for students with special educational needs (SEN) is good. The recently appointed coordinator (SENCO) has taken over a well run department which has made significant improvements since the last inspection report in 1998. The Code of Practice is being followed, and all SEN staff fulfil their duties within this. SEN provision is part of the work of the student development department. As a whole, this department is very well led, with successful, innovative approaches to providing inclusive education to a large number of students. Better procedures for the evaluation of IEP targets are needed.
61. Financial management is very good. The school has pioneered a very clear, threefold method for the allocation and expenditure of funds. This method, which has received national recognition, distinguishes normal revenue, recurring grants and the grants for specific projects which the school runs. In this way, it can allocate its regular funds in considerable detail, whilst also running projects for a limited time, for example the leadership of a project to rescue another school with serious weaknesses. Spending a variety of specially allocated funds in this way requires a high degree of financial planning, to ensure that the school's regular

programmes are securely managed, whilst making best use of staff and resources for other institutions. Further details of these extended school services are reported in the partnership section of this report.

62. The school makes very good use of the resources it receives. It makes good use of the principles of best value, and gives very good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	6021231	Balance from previous year	32857
Total expenditure	5624788	Balance carried forward to the next	429300
Expenditure per student	3955		

Note. Income and balance carried forward figures include sums for expenditure on special projects. Without these, the balance carried forward would be similar to that brought forward from 2002-03, and the expenditure per student would be some £200 lower.

63. The school has very successfully overcome the problem of a rapid turnover of staff by providing effective, rapid and extensive training within the school. Many staff have gone on for promotion, but the school has managed to find teachers of good calibre and to train them itself, for example in its programmes for overseas trained teachers and graduate trainees. Emphasis on such initiatives has led to a distinctive profile for the school as a provider of staff training and development.
64. Success has brought another problem in the shape of an increasingly crowded building, which now lacks enough adequate space for the teaching of some subjects, sixth form private study and social and assembly areas.
65. Since the last inspection, the very good quality of leadership and management has been at least maintained, for greatly increased numbers, and the school has greatly developed the range of services it provides to other schools. Improvement has therefore been good.

Leadership and management in the sixth form

66. The sixth form is very well led. Programmes led by senior staff, for example for the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the evaluation of students' progress, are of the same high quality as in the main school. Management is very good also, for example in the direction of the teams of tutors and the programme of careers events and visiting speakers. An excellent aspect of management is the strong integration of sixth form students in the life of the whole school, to the benefit of all.
67. Financial management of the sixth form is very good, and supports a wide curriculum and generous programme of activities. Income is higher than expenditure, so that sixth form funding makes a modest contribution to central costs.
68. Leadership and management of the sixth form were not described separately in the last report.

WORK RELATED LEARNING (WRL)

Provision in work-related learning is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work experience is highly valued by the students and covers a wide range of industrial experiences.
- The systems for guiding and preparing the students are excellent.
- Methods used to monitor the provision are good but not fully refined.

Commentary

69. Students' achievement in the core subjects and in the increasing number of vocational and occupational courses is very good. The four core subjects, including design and technology and ICT, contain significant elements of learning that are relevant to the 'real world'. Students learn very well through work experience. This is clearly shown by the display of photographs in the foyer. Work experience engages all students very effectively. In addition, all students achieve very good skills and attitudes through activities in the core and other subjects. Significant numbers of students add to these skills through very good residential experiences, business enterprise and reliability and initiative challenges. The very good impact of such off-site experience is clearly revealed in the students' comments when interviewed and their written evaluations that are collated along with certificates and other awards. These are also of value when the students apply and are interviewed through the school systems for work experience placements.
70. The quality of the current provision is very good. Teaching and learning overall are very good in all core and vocational courses. Highly effective examples of activities are found in product designing and computer aided manufacturing within design and technology, and in cross-curricular activities, for example of church architecture and design development over the centuries. Enrichment activities are very good, although there are gaps. Links with employers are very good.
71. The co-ordination of the subject is excellent. The school has audited the strong contribution made by many subjects to WRL. Statutory requirements are met. Planning for work experience in a wide variety of contexts is well established and highly effective. Students' progress files indicate very good monitoring of work experience. Monitoring of other aspects of WRL provision is less effective, although steps are being taken to sharpen and extend this. There is a clear intention further to strengthen the funding and training for all involved in WRL. Already it is clear that much learning across the curriculum is relevant to business and commerce, and is therefore of enhanced interest to most students.

EXAMPLE OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

How a school has achieved consistently good quality in all areas of its work by excellent management systems.

It is no wonder that other schools, as far away as Canada, look to Ravens Wood School for leadership in how to create a model of school management which aims for constant improvement. This is a school where virtually everything done is consistent, and of at least good quality. These are some of its ingredients for success:

- Every six weeks, students review their performance and targets with their tutor and new targets are set. Students are very well aware how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve further.
- Every six weeks, teachers go through a similar process with their line manager. Their targets are closely linked to the school development plan, which is itself linked to the school's aims. In this way, the school's aims are constantly reviewed.
- When teachers join, they have to prove their competence before joining the school's

sophisticated professional training and development programmes. Regular monitoring of performance identifies what teachers need to develop their skills, and the programme provides for their needs.

- Success in teaching and learning leads to a very positive atmosphere in which students expect good teaching and teachers can teach well.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use effective strategies to raise the achievement of boys.
- The strong focus on reading and writing skills raises standards.
- Experienced teachers provide very good support for new colleagues, ensuring consistent teaching.
- The high turnover of staff affects continuity.

Commentary

72. In the tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2004, students' results were well above average, maintaining a strong upward trend in recent years. Results were especially strong at the higher levels, with two thirds gaining level six or above.
73. In the 2004 GCSE English examinations, students continued the trend of previous years by gaining some of the highest results in the school. Results were well above average and much higher than boys generally attain. Students gained even higher results in English Literature where half as many gained A* and A grades than boys in the country as a whole.
74. Standards seen in the inspection in all years were well above average, reflecting the national tests and examination results. Students in lower attaining groups did especially well in comparison to their national counterparts, because teachers and learning assistants gave them individual help, and also because the strong focus on acquiring high standards of reading and writing throughout the school enabled them to accomplish work of a relatively high standard.
75. Students' achievement in Years 7 to 11 is very good. Teachers have undertaken considerable research into reasons for boys' underachievement in the country as a whole and have identified successful methods for raising achievement. Teachers also raise achievement by carefully preparing students for the skills needed in public examinations. The strong focus on promoting reading and on improving writing, speaking and listening skills has led to students making much higher than expected progress throughout the school.
76. The quality of teaching is good overall, though variable in quality. Teachers help students to tackle demanding tasks by clearly structuring lessons and checking continually that progress is being made. Students learn very well because most teachers ensure that lessons are calm and purposeful. Teachers mark students' work thoroughly and provide clear targets for improvement. The six-weekly assessment tasks ensure that students are informed of the progress they are making. However, younger students sometimes miss out on the practice they need in writing English because too few written activities are provided for them between assessments. Learning is adversely affected in cases where teachers have to waste time and effort moving from room to room.
77. Though for the time being there is no one individual leading the department, systems set up in the past are so strong that it continues to function well. The recent high turnover of staff affects

continuity. Over half the teachers in the department are newly qualified, new to the country or are still training. Nevertheless the effective support given by experienced teachers to new entrants ensures that in most cases the quality of lessons is maintained.

78. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Results continue to rise as teachers find effective ways of raising achievement. The previous lack of support for students with special educational needs has been met through effective setting and through the very good work of teaching assistants. At the time of the last inspection, the contribution made by English teachers to the social, moral, cultural and spiritual needs of students was emphasised. Though some teachers make provision for students on their own initiative, there is currently little evidence that these needs are fully met.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

79. Provision for language and literacy across the curriculum is good in most subjects, with examples of very good practice in design and technology and in English. Teachers in all departments understand the need to improve students' command of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Important subject-specific words are displayed in most classrooms and their meaning and use are reinforced in lessons. Standards of spelling and punctuation are higher than in many schools, because of the strong focus on these skills throughout the school. Though there are adequate novels for younger readers in the library, there are far too few books in most subjects to enable students to undertake their own research. The library is too small for the numbers in the school. Though there is a good emphasis on paired reading across the school, silent reading time for younger students in tutorial periods is not always effective.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE Results in French are above average and improving.
- The quality of teaching is very good. Students achieve and behave very well.
- The very effective assessment procedures contribute to good learning.
- A small number of students do not participate well enough in oral work.

Commentary

80. In 2003, GCSE French results were above average for all boys nationally, and in German a small group of higher-attaining boys achieved results just above the average for all boys nationally. This represents good achievement. In 2004 results improved, especially in German. Over recent years there has been continual improvement.
81. Standards in the current Year 9, where all students learn French, are above average overall and students achieve well. Students with special educational needs or who are learning English as an additional language achieve as well as others in their class and are supported effectively. The main characteristics of students' good performance are their very good behaviour and careful listening in class. As a result, they learn well and many develop good pronunciation and listening skills. Very effective assessment procedures in class as well as over time, including regular tests and target setting for students, contribute well to this good picture of achievement. A small number of students do not participate enough in oral work and need more encouragement and practice in sustained chorus work to develop their speaking skills effectively. Students do not re-draft their written work with sufficient regularity to learn from their mistakes.

82. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average and students achieve well. Three quarters of students in Years 10 and 11 are studying a language, which is exceptional in national terms. Students have very positive attitudes towards examination preparation and work purposefully, with good guidance from their teachers. Many higher and middle attainers try hard to express themselves in the foreign language and guess at meaning readily in reading tasks. Some students, however, are reluctant to say when they do not understand listening and reading tasks. A small group of students has begun German from scratch in Year 10 and has made an excellent start in this demanding course. A group of Year 9 students has started GCSE work for early entry in their Year 10. They are working and achieving very well in all language skills.
83. Teaching is very good overall and students learn very well as a result. Half the lessons seen were very good or excellent. The strengths of all teachers are their very good management of students' behaviour, their support and encouragement, and their high expectations that students will behave and perform well. They assess students regularly. Teachers use ICT very effectively and imaginatively to enhance their lessons and thoroughly engage their students' interest and participation. A few teachers do not use the foreign language enough to familiarise students thoroughly with the pronunciation and use of new words and structures. Some students need more encouragement to participate fully in all language activities. Teachers vary slightly in the quality of presentation and amount of written work they require of their students.
84. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department provides a forceful and purposeful sense of direction and the whole team works very well together. The foreign language assistants are organised very effectively. Many students have benefited both socially and culturally from the extensive programme of visits, exchanges and work experience abroad. The input of ICT, including an exciting video-conferencing project, is developing rapidly. Lessons are very long for young language learners. The departmental handbook lacks several essential documents.
85. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Teaching has improved and many new projects have been introduced, raising the effectiveness of the whole department.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 9 are well above national figures.
- Standards at the end of Year 11 are above the national average but lower than the results in both English and science.
- Teaching is good overall; teachers are committed to helping their students to do well and relationships are very good.
- Teachers miss opportunities to assess and record students' progress in learning during lessons.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good. Good teamwork is helping to raise teachers' expectations of what students can achieve.

Commentary

86. Standards in mathematics are above nationally expected levels overall. Students' attainment in mathematics when they enter the school is at least average. Results in the national tests for Year 9 have been consistently well above the national average over several years. In 2004, results improved further. The proportion of the students achieving Level 5 and above, and Level 6 or better, exceeded significantly the 2003 national figures for schools with a similar starting point. The students made very good progress between Year 7 and Year 9. Standards in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were above the national average both for all students and for boys.

The 2004 mathematics results were similar to those of 2003 despite the rise in the overall school results. Students at all levels do not necessarily gain grades as high as they should, partly because coursework marks are too low, and partly because of early entry for GCSE examinations. There is little significant difference in the progress of different groups of students. Those with special needs also make good progress by the end of Year 11.

87. Overall standards in Year 9 are well above the national average. Achievement in lessons is generally above expected levels and the work in the students' books, including those who have special educational needs, reflects mostly good progress across the expected areas of mathematics. Many students have good numerical skills and these are developed well across the early years so that manipulative algebra skills are also strong. Able students are quick to spot number and other patterns. However, some graphical work and areas of shape and space are hindered by the students' careless presentation of work. Most students are confident in applying their skills to problem solving, and are at ease with the interpretation of word problems. Generally, when opportunities arise, students are able to communicate reasons for answers orally.
88. By the end of Year 11, students achieve well but are less successful in mathematics than in other core curricular areas. A contributory factor for some students is the rushed coverage of the GCSE content because of the previous policy of early entry for the examination. Low coursework marks have also lessened the achievements of students in the middle groups. Data handling projects are not well developed, with many students paying insufficient attention to analysing and interpreting the data. Work on investigative tasks often fails to explain clearly enough how generalisations are obtained.
89. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good overall. Working relationships are very good and all teachers are committed to helping students achieve of their best. Students learn well because of the high expectations of teachers in Years 7 to 9. Generally in GCSE classes, learning is supported by the students' high motivation to do well. However, when students are insufficiently challenged, they lose concentration and occasionally indulge in low-level disruptive behaviour. The best lessons are carefully structured and provide a range of learning opportunities to enhance thinking skills. In other less effective lessons, teachers do not always plan learning outcomes precisely enough and sometimes insufficient attention is given to assessing accurately what students have understood as a result of teaching.
90. The mathematics department has implemented well the school's six-week assessment cycle. However, day-to-day procedures do not always give enough attention to the detailed assessment of students' understanding in lessons. Many students receive helpful and immediate oral feedback on their work in lessons and there are some examples of diagnostic marking of good quality, which enables students to improve their work. However, some marking in classwork books is cursory and does not help to correct errors and misunderstandings. As a result, students take too little care in written work and exercise books do not always help to reinforce learning.
91. Present very good leadership and management are encouraging a committed team approach that is tackling robustly the challenge of improving attainment in GCSE examinations and of developing the teaching skills of teachers new to the school. Good practice within the team is now improving the overall quality of teaching, which is still too variable. There is a planned training programme to encourage innovative ideas in teaching key areas of mathematics and to support teachers' use of ICT resources. Since the last inspection, the department has made good progress in improving the national test results at the end of Year 9 and has sustained the overall quality of teaching despite many staff changes.

Mathematics across the curriculum

92. There is good provision within mathematics to develop students' numeracy skills alongside other aspects of the subject. At whole-school level, staff training has laid the foundations for departments to integrate elements of numeracy into schemes of work. Cross-curricular provision is generally very good in areas such as science, geography, and design and technology. When opportunities arise, students use numerical skills well, as in geography and science. For example, Year 11 students use data handling skills very competently to enhance their fieldwork projects. In science, students are able to apply their knowledge of graphs efficiently to assist in interpreting experimental results. Higher order numerical skills support the precision of the students' work in design and technology. In other subject areas, students use their mathematical skills well when opportunities arise. In modern foreign languages, students in Year 7 work with numbers but have little practice in using money and other number skills throughout the rest of the course. Work in history includes some graph and pictorial representation and both music and physical education afford students useful opportunities to apply their mathematics. Overall provision to use and enhance mathematical skills throughout the curriculum is good.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching. Standards are well above average.
- Lessons are well planned with varied content that engages students' interest.
- Teachers help students learn by reinforcing previous work before building on it.
- Higher attaining students in some groups are not always well enough stretched.

Commentary

93. Results in Year 9 were well above the national average in 2003, continuing an improving trend. Students did better than expected in comparison with those having similar prior attainment. Results in 2004 were similar. In GCSE examinations, results were above average in 2003, but students did much less well than expected in relation to their prior attainment. 2004 results were significantly better.
94. When students enter the school in Year 7 standards are just above average overall, though a significant minority of students is below this. They achieve very well and standards are well above average by the end of Year 9 and end of Year 11, matching recent national test and GCSE results. Students concentrate very well and little time is lost through inattention. As a result, almost all work to capacity throughout the full length of lessons. They know that progress is closely monitored and regularly reported to parents; under-achieving students are identified and supported as necessary in reaching their target level or grade. Very few students have significantly lower than average standards by Year 9. Those with special educational needs also achieve very well because support assistants have a clearly defined role in helping them focus attention on key learning points rather than responding to situations as they arise.
95. Teaching and learning in science are very good. About half the lessons seen during the inspection were very good, while almost all others were good. Teachers plan lessons with a variety of activities that engage students' interest. In an applied science lesson, students compared the effects of cooked and uncooked liver on hydrogen peroxide solution before going on to research the importance of enzymes in the brewing industry. Students' learning is regularly reinforced, often by reviewing previous work through 'starter' activities. As a result, most students have a good grasp of key scientific terms such as 'element', helping them to

describe and explain their work clearly. Higher-attaining students in some groups are not always well enough stretched and encouraged to extend learning beyond basic lesson content. The quality of teachers' marking comments in exercise books is variable and often does not show students what they should do to improve.

96. Leadership and management of science are very good. Teachers work well together as a team, for example supporting inexperienced colleagues in improving their practice. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been restructured and an applied science course successfully implemented; first examination results show significant improvement from the previous year. More remains to be done further to improve the consistency of some aspects of teaching, such as quality of marking and linking scientific principles with their applications. The department is aware of a number of health and safety issues.
97. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The proportion of very good lessons has increased, leading to higher standards and better GCSE results.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above the expected levels throughout the school and students achieve well.
- Teaching is good across the school.
- Very good leadership from the head of department is enabling a relatively inexperienced team to operate effectively.
- Other departments are constrained from providing a really rich ICT experience to their students in Years 7 to 9 because of shortages in accommodation.

Commentary

98. Standards are above expected levels throughout the school. Standards in Year 9 have fluctuated, but the underlying trend has been one of improvement. Since the school introduced a full GCSE course for all students, the proportions gaining the highest grades have remained fairly steady, but the proportion gaining at least a grade C has steadily climbed. Standards observed in the work completed by students this year and in lessons confirm these rising standards. These students joined the school with standards at best in line with those seen nationally, and often below. They have achieved well to attain standards which are now above what would normally be expected. This represents good improvement since the last inspection when standards were reported as being in line with those expected nationally.
99. This good achievement comes from good teaching. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was satisfactory; improvement in teaching has been good. Positive features include very effective planning, based on excellent technical knowledge of the curriculum, imaginative methods, the use of questioning and the way that teachers move around the class ensuring all are on task. When teachers have high expectations of behaviour and work rate, students work diligently and with enthusiasm. Lessons then have a brisk pace and learning is enhanced. Nearly all teachers are specialists. Very good leadership from the head of department has enabled the school to obtain well qualified people and train them in school, for example, as part of the graduate teacher programme. However, not all staff have high enough expectations of behaviour, and this has an effect on the pace of some lessons. Very good planning is not yet translated directly into very good teaching and learning, as in a few lessons some students become restless and disengaged from learning.
100. The head of department is aware of the needs of her relatively inexperienced department, and of the factors that have led to, and also slowed, improvements. She provides her staff with a

very good role model of how the subject should be taught and is readily available to members of the department for formal and informal consultation. Although her monitoring of teaching is informal, she has a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and is able to translate that into support or further training. The departmental handbook is a rigorous and useful reference for teachers. She has successfully led the department to make good improvement since the last inspection. The department's accommodation is good, with a number of rooms that are very well equipped with computers and other hardware, and this helps learning further. However, the department does make heavy use of these rooms, which are rarely available to other departments.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

101. Almost all departments fulfil their statutory requirements for teaching ICT, but in Years 7 to 9 the extent of the ICT experience provided is constrained by a shortage of accommodation. Consequently, the art and design department is unable to fulfil its statutory requirements in these years, and other subjects, including English, history, music, religious education and science can only offer limited access to these students. ICT is not always fully embedded in their schemes of work. The mathematics department has its own suite of computers and is able to integrate ICT into its schemes of work well. The picture is better in Years 10 and 11, where more use is made of ICT, for example in music. Giving subjects in Years 7-9 enough access to ICT equipment is a priority for the school.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' skills and subject knowledge ensure very good pace and progress.
- Student-teacher relationships are constructive, courteous and conducive to progress.
- A willingness to explore new initiatives and share good practice is raising standards.
- Students of the highest ability need more challenge.
- Marking of work does not give students enough information on their progress.

Commentary

102. This is a very good department with some excellent features.

103. Year 9 teacher assessments in 2003 show most students working at levels significantly higher than nationally expected levels. This represents very good achievement since students entered the school. Assessments were even higher in 2004. This improving trend comes from very good teaching, schemes of work and lesson plans.

104. GCSE results for 2003 were above average, although achievement in the top two grades was significantly below that of the school overall. Achievement of grades B and C was in line with the rest of the school. In 2004, results declined a little further, but were still rather above the national average level reported in 2003.

105. Standards of work seen in Years 7–9 were well above nationally expected levels. Work was very well presented, with very good use of relevant graphs, maps and diagrams. Extended prose was well used for analysis and helped to extend the good standards of literacy which are a feature of these years. Numeracy skills are very good. Students with special needs or who are very able achieve very well because of the very good support they receive.

106. Scrutiny of students' work in Years 10 and 11 reveals good standards, with a range of relevant skills appropriate to each topic. Case study material is used to exemplify topics and some more able students show originality and enterprise in using on-line access to broaden their understanding. The majority of students produce work of a good standard. There is evidence of some repetition of work in some books, inaccuracies that have not been corrected and marking that, although it complies with the whole school six week cycle, is not sufficiently diagnostic.
107. Literacy skills are developed to a very good standard, demonstrated in the quality of spoken answers and class discussion which employs accurate technical terminology. Numeracy skills are good, as shown by data manipulation and the use of graphs and charts, though this element has not been fully developed beyond Year 9. Students are very proficient in the use of ICT.
108. Teaching is very good overall and ranges from good to excellent. Lessons are characterised by very good, unobtrusive class management. This is combined with very good subject knowledge and with well varied skills of delivery. Learning in all years is good overall. Lower and middle ability students learn very well because the school's behavioural management system helps them greatly. The department has recognised the need to boost the learning of students of high ability and has introduced pilot approaches into Years 9 and 11.
109. Leadership is very good. The head of department is introducing the improvements required. Staff individual action plans are firmly rooted in the drive for excellence in teaching, and the department is committed to continuous improvement. Very good schemes of work are linked to detailed lesson planning. The expertise of individual staff is used to pilot initiatives, with beneficial effect for the rest of the school. Links and other initiatives with other schools and establishments are good. These include student links, which also extend internationally, together with staff liaison and training.
110. Management is very good because the department is organised efficiently and works with a high degree of collaboration. The department very effectively debates the curriculum and good teaching methods. Standards have been well maintained since the last inspection.

History

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE exam results show an improving trend and are now well above national averages.
- Students achieve very well.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good and assessment is very well done, leading to very good learning by students.
- There is a shortage of accommodation in the department.

Commentary

111. Year 9 teacher assessments were well above national averages in 2004 and have been improving steadily over the past three years. GCSE results in 2003 were above national averages and improved quite considerably in 2004. All students achieved a pass grade and the number of higher grades increased substantially to well above national averages. In both these years achievement, in terms of prior attainment, was very good. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

112. Standards of work seen in Years 7–9 are well above nationally expected levels and achievement is very good. By Year 9, students have developed very good enquiry skills. All, including those students with special educational needs, can extract information from a variety of written and pictorial material, including the Internet, to answer historical questions using appropriate historical vocabulary. Boys know that history is based on evidence; their ability to evaluate this evidence is being very well developed in Years 7–9, as was seen in a Year 8 lesson on Elizabeth 1. Students have very good oral and listening skills and these are better developed than writing skills because they have many more opportunities to develop these in lessons. Most students have a very good knowledge and understanding of the major historical events and personalities of the periods they have studied and they can place these in a chronological framework. Lower-attaining students have a satisfactory but more limited understanding.
113. Standards in the current Year 11 are very good and boys achieve very well. They are highly motivated and demonstrate a willingness fully to participate in lessons, making good contributions to oral discussions. They have developed very good analytical skills, both in the evaluation of sources of evidence and in their understanding of historical concepts such as cause and consequence. Higher attaining students can make justified conclusions and supported judgements, as was seen in their coursework on World War 1 and Vietnam.
114. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, with some excellent features. Lessons are very well planned and have a clear structure. Relationships in the classroom are excellent and boys respond well to stimulating and consistently challenging teaching. Lower attaining students and those with SEN, are well supported, whilst gifted and talented students are appropriately extended. Marking and assessment are very thorough and students know how well they are doing and are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
115. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a clear focus on raising achievement and systems and structures are in place to support this. The head of department leads his team of hardworking and dedicated teachers very well. They provide a good programme of enrichment activities for students. However, the limited number of specialist history rooms means that both teachers and classes move around a number of different rooms, which has an impact on teaching and learning. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Religious education

Overall provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The achievement of students on GCSE examination courses is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Students' attitudes and responses are very good.
- School planning for the religious education of those not on the examination courses in Years 10 and 11 does not fully meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus and restricts the achievement of these students.
- Assessment tasks for students in Years 7–9 need closer linking to standards in the Agreed Syllabus so that students' progress can be more closely monitored.

Commentary

116. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. In Years 7 and 8, students know and understand key elements of religious belief and practice. In Year 9, they can evaluate and respond to issues such as evil and suffering.

Across Years 7–9, oral contributions are often above average. The overall levels of attainment by the end of Year 9 were affected adversely at the time of the inspection, as the highest attaining students in the accelerated learning class did not then follow a full course of religious education.

117. Attainment in the GCSE examination full course is above the national average for boys, both in A*-C and A*-G grades. In lessons, boys show good understanding and can evaluate and discuss their opinions with confidence. The written work of middle and lower attaining students does not always reflect the quality of their oral contributions.
118. As students move through Years 7–9, achievement of all students, including those with special educational needs, is good. Achievement of students in the GCSE examination course is very good. Boys show higher levels of interest and commitment than is often found in other schools. The achievement of other students in Years 10–11 is restricted because of the nature of the curriculum.
119. Overall, teaching and learning are very good, and best in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are highly qualified and experienced and work very well as a team. The best features of lessons include the pacing, the detailed planning and the wide range of teaching and learning styles used to engage and motivate students. Relationships with, and management of, students are very good. High expectations mean that boys learn well. They make very good gains in speaking and listening, empathy and respect for the beliefs and values of others. Students are given helpful feedback on how to improve their work, although there is some inconsistency in the way marks are awarded in Years 7–9. The department is continually developing and reviewing assessment procedures and has recognised the need to refine procedures by clearly linking tasks and criteria to national standards. It is well placed to do so, as it takes a leading role in local authority developments in this area.
120. Leadership and management are very good. The department consists of an unusually strong team of four specialists. It regularly reviews and refines its provision. Teachers have very high levels of commitment. Professional development is very good. The new head of department has the competence and vision to move the department further and has already implemented a new procedure for benchmark testing in order to monitor the progress of students from Year 7.
121. The school's allocation of time to the subject in Years 7–9 and examination classes in Years 10–11 is very good. The attainment and achievement of the Year 9 accelerated class, and those students not taking GCSE examinations, is currently restricted by an inadequate provision for the Agreed Syllabus. The school's approach to the delivery of the Agreed Syllabus in Years 10–11 is through assemblies, 'action days' and elements of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Whilst this approach does offer some valuable experience to the students, it does not fully meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. Most of it is not planned, delivered or monitored by the religious education specialists. Accommodation is very good for half of the department; the remainder work in shabby mobile classrooms in another area of the school.
122. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards at GCSE have been maintained. Staffing, the quality of teaching, learning and achievement have all improved. The school has moved forward in meeting the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus, but it still does not fully comply.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards, for Year 11 students, which were average when they started in 2000, are now very high.
- The stimulating display of work reflects teachers' enthusiasm and expertise and the achievements of students with differing learning styles.
- Students are proud of their products that have quality similar to those 'on the high street'.
- New units on working with metal and programs for high fliers are having a good impact.

Commentary

123. Standards, by the end of Year 11 in GCSE examinations in 2003 were very high. Standards in tests by the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average. Results in 2004 are higher. Standards in work seen during the inspection are very high in Year 11, though short on lively sketches and annotation. By the end of Year 9, standards are well above average in designing and making, and students are catching up with some essential skills.
124. Achievement is excellent. Students in Years 10 and 11 worked independently with total concentration, much thought and good humour. Students worked purposefully, thoughtfully, independently and cheerfully. Achievement is excellent in Years 7–9. For example, students worked well with their teachers to improve the design and arrangement of components on a circuit board. Students respond very well to the challenge of new units of work, which are created to encourage better designing decisions as early as Year 7. For example, high achieving students were full of enthusiasm after excellent demonstrations about types of lighting.
125. Teaching and learning in Years 7–9 are very good, as observed particularly when excitement stimulated interest, for example with robot control systems and competitive designing. However, opportunities were missed in some lessons to involve students confidently in seeing how well they had just done and to agree with the teacher the next immediate best step to improve. Teaching and learning are excellent in Years 10 and 11, especially when the teacher shows the students how to fulfil the course criteria creatively. Thanks to such lively teaching, students apply their new knowledge of product design, for example to classic vehicles. They confidently review their achievements and accept homework eagerly. Excellent improvement in product quality was seen because teachers were sensitive to the needs of individuals and adapted the lesson to enhance self-esteem.
126. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards have improved faster than nationally. Even though key teachers have been promoted elsewhere, the new team is well placed for further improvement and the sharing of excellent, innovative ideas to make the subject even more exciting. Newly qualified teachers are playing a big part in the resurgence of design and technology in the school. Competitive projects with industry are envisaged. Leadership and management are therefore excellent.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination outcomes are high.
- Assessment systems are detailed and support students' progress.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure.
- Students' attitudes to art are very positive.

- Photography is a strength within the department.
- Curriculum time in Years 7 to 9 is too limited.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning in art is under-developed.

Commentary

127. Students begin Year 7 with a mixed and sometimes limited experience of art, but standards are in line with nationally expected levels by the end of Year 9, representing good progress and achievement for most students. These standards are not as high, however, as those suggested by recent Year 9 teacher assessments, which lack accuracy and consistency. GCSE results in 2003 were well above national averages. The 2004 results are slightly below these same standards. Overall students' achieve just as well in art as in their other subjects.
128. The good progress that students make from Years 7 to 9 is shown by their accelerated development of skills and their understanding of the formal elements of art evidenced in their work. This is achieved despite the limited curriculum time available. Students work in an increasing range of media to develop their ideas and the use of sketchbooks is well established. There is, however, some variation in standards and practice across the department and teachers occasionally change the learning focus within activities. These inconsistencies have not been identified through formal monitoring processes. Students who are less able in art sometimes complete pieces of work poorly rather than succeeding in more appropriate tasks.
129. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good, with students showing increasing independence in their responses to the course themes and making personal choices of media and subject matter. Sketchbooks are used very well as a collecting point for ideas and experimentation. Students who are less artistic also make good progress and are following their personal interests by opting for GCSE courses.
130. The quality of teaching seen in lessons was good and there were often very good features such as the effective use of peer assessment and high expectations. Teaching is more focused in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 and more use could be made of teaching approaches promoted by the National Key Stage 3 Strategy to engage younger students' interest at the beginning of lessons. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and make very effective references to the work of other artists to motivate students and to support their ideas.
131. Leadership by the relatively new head of department is good and her management of the subject is very good. Recently introduced assessment systems are very effective in moving students forward with their work. Resources to promote the use of ICT to support teaching and for students to use as an alternative artistic medium are inadequate, and there is insufficient technical support for the preparation of teaching resources and materials.
132. Despite the continuing good work of the department in terms of standards, the issues raised in the last inspection report concerning the lack of formal monitoring within the department and the development of ICT have not been addressed. The improvement since the last inspection is therefore unsatisfactory.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is very well led and managed by two enthusiastic entrants into the teaching profession.
- Results in the GCSE examinations are well above average.

- The second drama studio is small and ill-equipped.

Commentary

133. Results in the drama GCSE examinations in recent years have been consistently well above average. This is also the case in the sixth form examinations.
134. Standards seen in the inspection from Years 7 to 11 were well above average, reflecting the high standards of seriousness and commitment established by their teachers.
135. The achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is very good. They quickly learn sophisticated dramatic skills, both practical and theoretical, because teachers ensure that students understand each step before moving to the next and also because teachers explain and reinforce important subject-specific words. This level of achievement is maintained and developed in Years 10 and 11.
136. Teaching is good overall with examples of very good teaching at all stages. Teachers ensure that what is taught covers all aspects of dramatic skills from improvisation to scripted plays.
137. The department is very well led and managed by two enthusiastic entrants into the profession, who are familiar with the school through their training on the graduate teaching programme. Though answerable to an assistant head teacher, they have jointly taken responsibility for preparing detailed and appropriate schemes of work and for ordering the department's paperwork. They also run a very good programme of clubs and dramatic performances.
138. Progress since the time of the previous inspection has been good and the high success rate in the public examinations has been maintained. There is now a second drama studio, but it is too small and ill-equipped for use by large numbers of younger students.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership is improving students' opportunities and provision.
- GCSE results are well above average because of very good teaching and learning and ICT music programmes.
- A minority of students in Years 8 and 9 underachieve and progress in keyboard skills is too slow for the majority of students by Year 9.
- A very good enrichment programme attracts above-average levels of student participation and attains high standards.
- Teaching in about half the classes in Years 7–9 varies in quality, mainly because of inexperience.

Commentary

139. Students' attainment on entry is just below average. In work seen by Year 9, attainment has risen to average, although significant minorities of students are above and below average. Recent teachers' assessments confirm these differing levels, indicating a well above average proportion of students gaining National Curriculum level 6 and above, while approximately one third fail to reach National Curriculum level 5. Although achievement is good overall by Year 9, too many students who have the potential to gain National Curriculum level 5 are not currently doing so.
140. GCSE results in 2003 and 2004, which are well above average, demonstrate an impressive proportion of higher grades. The above-average standards of work seen in Year 11 confirms

that because of very good teaching and their good performing and ICT skills, the majority of students are on course to gain the high grades predicted by the school. Overall achievement by Year 11 is good. The range of attainment is much wider at an early stage in Year 10. This is a larger than usual group with a minority of students who do not play an instrument or are at an early stage of learning one. They are also the students whose learning has been most affected by staffing changes and who have benefited least from recent improvements in music provision. Students with special educational needs are now beginning to make similar progress to others.

141. Teaching and learning are good overall. The best teaching, which is very good, was seen in Years 10 and 11. Students' positive and enthusiastic responses to its challenges, the very good individual support they enjoy and their opportunities for independent learning result not only in high GCSE grades, but a sound basis for continued studies in the sixth form.
142. Teaching is good in Years 7–9, but more varied in quality because about half of it is given by teachers new to the school, some of them inexperienced. As a result, students' learning is inconsistent across lessons and behaviour is sometimes unsatisfactory. Teachers need to reinforce and consolidate new work more effectively, checking that lower attaining students can do it. As electronic keyboards are the primary performing resource in these years, most students' keyboard technique is disappointing. At present, these students do not have sufficient access to ICT music programmes. The majority of their lessons takes place in accommodation which is too small and restricts activities. All these factors mean that the patchy knowledge and skill development of a minority of students in Years 8 and 9 is not being improved quickly enough.
143. The school offers an ambitious programme of enrichment which provides a higher than average proportion of students with very good opportunities for musical and personal development through individual instrumental lessons and ensembles. The quality of teaching, coaching, direction and organisation is very high, and results in regular public performances in school, within the area and abroad.
144. The recently appointed head of department has already demonstrated very good leadership by promoting significant improvements in provision and minimising the effects of staffing changes through good management. The subject development plan does not yet indicate how the process of raising attainment and achievement will continue and there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure consistency of practice and quality. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is good, as all strengths have been maintained and many have improved significantly during a period which had potential for decline.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well because teaching is very good. They have very positive attitudes and relationships are good.
- There is an excellent extra-curricular programme and high standards are achieved in competitive sport.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and enables all students to experience a variety of activities.
- Within the department, there is no established monitoring and evaluation of teaching or learning.
- Assessment for learning in Years 10–11 is weak and is not being used to monitor progress, set targets or inform planning.

Commentary

145. Students enter the school with above average standards and make good progress throughout Years 7–9. Consequently, standards at the end of Year 9 are well above nationally expected levels. Skills in games are a strength. Students understand tactics and apply them effectively. They have good ball skills in rugby, football and basketball. In gymnastics, students display good body strength, control and balance, and a high level of mutual trust in the partner work. They are able to evaluate each other's performance. They are encouraged to use technical terms in their feedback and they do this confidently.
146. In Years 10 and 11, standards are above nationally expected levels and achievement is good. Students respond well to the high level of challenge, and practise hard to improve their skills.
147. GCSE is a popular option in Years 10–11. Standards are well above nationally expected levels and progress is very good. The quality of written work is good. Notes are well written and provide a good source for revision. Work is regularly marked and constructive comments suggest how improvements can be made. Homework is set regularly and used effectively to consolidate and extend learning. Completion rates are good.
148. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers plan well and mostly ensure that the needs of all students are met. Literacy and numeracy skills are well supported. Teachers have high expectations of students' work, behaviour and attitudes and this promotes good achievement. Good relationships exist amongst students and between students and staff. The pace of learning is always brisk and lessons are well planned with clear objectives communicated to students. Students work hard because they have plenty of encouragement and support. Teachers have very good classroom management skills and good subject knowledge. Assessment procedures are good throughout Years 7-9 but need further development in Years 10-11. Whilst good use is made of digital photography and video to evaluate students' performance, more access to ICT is needed. The provision for gifted and talented students is developing. Presently many benefit from existing links with local sports clubs.
149. Leadership is good. Clear vision gives positive, realistic direction. Teachers are committed and hardworking. They promote physical education in a very positive, challenging manner. Sport is very popular amongst students who speak with enthusiasm about the subject. The head of department provides a very good role model in all his work, particularly in the classroom and through his commitment to high standards. Management is good. The department is well organised and the department plan is sharply focussed on strategies to improve standards and review curriculum provision. Formal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning has yet to be established to ensure that best practice is shared. The department organises an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Staff willingly give their time to support these activities, which give students a good sense of community and promote self-esteem.
150. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards in both stages have greatly improved. The quality of teaching and learning is now consistently good and often very good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and offers more educational opportunities than before, particularly during Years 10-11.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for personal and social education is very good. With citizenship, it is taught as part of the morning tutorial sessions and through the 'action days', which end the regular six-weekly cycles. Planning and coordination are both very good. Topics are well chosen, with good progression of subject matter as students move up the school.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship throughout the school is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good opportunities to participate in the running of the school, which contributes much to their active involvement in citizenship.
- The cross-curricular delivery is generally good, but the citizenship elements of topics are not always made explicit to students.
- The very good leadership and management result in very good planning and coordination of the curriculum.

Commentary

151. In the lessons seen, standards were above average and achievement was very good. In a Year 12 lesson students were very articulate and knowledgeable about the power of the media and expressed their views knowledgeably and very coherently.
152. The teaching and learning of citizenship in tutor groups and in other subjects of the curriculum are very good overall, and were excellent in one lesson seen. Citizenship is taught in tutor groups once a week, and during the inspection there were also explicit examples of citizenship seen in some subjects. Opportunities for citizenship in other subjects were sometimes taken, but not made explicit. Students evaluate the content of lessons and their involvement in them, keeping a record of the work they produce. Students have very good opportunities to experience elements of citizenship in assemblies, on activity days, during work experience, on trips and visits and in school elections. Students who take part in the school leadership group have an outstanding engagement in citizenship. Many gifted and talented students have very good opportunities to experience aspects of citizenship, when representing the county or country in a wide range of sports, music and drama activities. Others experience citizenship in an impressive variety of extra-curricular activities.
153. Leadership and management are very good. The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been very well planned and the vision for its development is clear. The school carried out a detailed audit of aspects of citizenship already taught in subjects, which has enabled it to develop a very comprehensive matrix of topics and activities to be taught from Year 7 to Year 13 in tutor groups. The monitoring of the teaching and learning of citizenship in tutor groups is thorough. Tutors co-ordinate assessment well. The resources for use in tutor groups are up-to-date and very appropriate. Lesson plans are very good. Citizenship features in the schemes of work of most departments. There are very good displays relating to citizenship in many classrooms and in corridors.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	5	80.0	80.1	0.0	23.7	30.0	29.9
Biology	2	100.0	65.2	50.0	11.1	40.0	20.6
Business studies	11	100.0	76.4	18.2	16.3	32.7	26.2
Chemistry	2	100.0	72.7	0.0	13.9	30.0	24.1
Communication studies	12	100.0	86.4	83.3	23.8	54.2	32.0
English literature	5	80.0	85.9	0.0	19.1	28.0	30.2
French	5	40.0	78.2	0.0	18.9	10.0	27.6
Design and technology	2	100.0	74.9	0.0	15.1	30.0	25.3
General studies	84	35.7	73.9	2.4	17.8	8.6	25.7
Geography	2	100.0	74.3	0.0	19.8	25.0	26.5
History	1	100.0	80.7	0.0	19.5	30.0	28.6
Information technology	11	72.7	67.0	36.4	10.9	34.5	21.4
Mathematics	9	77.8	61.9	0.0	17.1	21.1	22.1
Music	1	100.0	86.5	100	21.4	50.0	30.7
Physics	3	100.0	68.6	0.0	14.4	30.0	22.7
Religious studies	3	100.0	80.2	0.0	22.6	30.0	29.8
Sociology	3	100.0	71.8	33.3	18.4	43.3	25.4
Sports studies	1	100.0	73.2	0.0	11.4	20.0	23.1

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	12	100.0	98.6	58.3	50.2	93.3	87.5

Biology	6	100.0	96.4	50.9	39.2	83.3	78.6
Business studies	31	100.0	98.7	38.7	36.8	80.0	80.1
Chemistry	9	100.0	90.7	11.1	49.0	73.3	84.9
Communication studies	28	100.0	99.4	57.1	37.8	90.0	82.1
Drama	6	100.0	99.5	33.3	40.1	86.7	83.6
English literature	22	100.0	99.5	68.2	46.5	96.4	86.5
Design and technology	11	100.0	97.8	18.2	35.0	72.7	77.9
General studies	45	100.0	94.7	4.4	31.0	64.0	73.1
Geography	8	100.0	98.7	50.0	44.5	90.0	84.0
German	4	75.0	98.4	25.0	47.9	50.0	84.8
History	33	100.0	99.0	21.2	44.6	75.8	84.6
Information technology	35	100.0	95.6	22.9	24.6	68.0	69.5
Information technology (vocational)	14	42.9	77.9	0	23.4	18.6	64.9
Leisure and recreation (vocational)	10	0	62.9	0	10.2	0	57.9
Mathematics	8	87.5	96.7	37.5	55.6	80.0	88.8
Music	4	100.0	98.8	75.0	38.9	95.0	81.1
Physics	12	100.0	96.7	25.0	44.6	76.7	81.7
Religious studies	17	100.0	98.8	23.5	46.7	78.8	85.6
Sociology	8	100.0	98.2	0.0	44.3	62.5	83.6
Sports studies	8	100.0	98.0	12.5	30.9	52.5	75.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French were inspected at AS and A2-levels. These subjects are reported below. Other subjects sampled were drama and German. Two lessons were seen in drama, one at AS-level and one at A2-level. In both lessons, teaching was good and students made good progress. One lesson was seen in German at A2-level. Teaching was very good and students achieved very well.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers equip students very well with the skills required for examinations.
- Students' work is assessed very well according to examination criteria and students are given clear advice on how to raise their grades.
- Students are committed to learning well.

Commentary

154. In 2004, fewer students gained Grades A or B than in the previous year, when a considerably higher number had achieved these grades than nationally. In the whole period since the previous inspection, results have been improving. Girls' results were lower overall than boys' in 2003 and 2004, reflecting the department's strong focus on practising examination techniques from the earliest years, which they, as newcomers to the school, have had less time to acquire.
155. Standards of work seen in the inspection were well above average. Students quickly learn specific techniques which help them to aim for the highest grades. The tasks set are in most cases challenging and require careful attention to detail. Students learn to identify and use important quotations, because teachers ensure that texts are understood by focusing on language.
156. Students' achievement is very good. Teachers ensure by skilful questioning and revision that students understand each step before proceeding to the next. In the best lessons seen, students demonstrated a full understanding of the issues taught and joined with enthusiasm into group activities such as role-play, designed to increase their understanding of characters.
157. Teaching is good overall. Some examples of very good teaching were seen, especially where students were challenged with new ideas and where the lesson moved swiftly from one activity to the next. In some lessons seen, the pace of learning was slower and tasks were less well chosen. Students' essays are assessed very well, according to examination criteria, and students are given clear advice on how to raise their grades. Students are strongly committed to learning and work hard, analysing texts in considerable detail. Attendance in lessons is good. Wherever possible, students are taught by experienced and long-serving teachers to ensure continuity. Leadership and management are good, as in the main school. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

158. Provision for language and literacy across the curriculum is good overall. Technical vocabulary is especially well taught in media studies, English, geography, history, and leisure and tourism, but is less well taught in mathematics and science in the sixth form. In music, students are taught to write effective extended essays. Discussion and debate are strong features of sixth form lessons in art. The lack of space in school for private study has an adverse impact on learning in the sixth form. The library is too small for silent study and contains too few computers for the large number of students in the sixth form. There are too few large dictionaries and reference books to enable students to develop their own language and literacy skills.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and students achieve well.
- Assessment procedures are thorough and contribute to good learning.
- Numbers of students have been low, but they have increased considerably this year.

Commentary

159. Over recent years numbers of students taking French have been low and most A2 results have been below what would be expected from students' GCSE grades. In 2003, no students took

A2 French, but in 2004 the sole student achieved very well to gain an A grade. AS results have presented a similar picture, although they improved in 2004.

160. In the current Year 13, standards are average overall and the three students achieve well. These students have very positive attitudes towards French and are very keen to learn. Their understanding of French is good and they make considerable efforts to express their opinions and ideas. The standard of written work ranges from good to below average in terms of complexity and accuracy of structure and grammar. Although students do a lot of exercises, these mainly consist of short answers to questions on written texts; the amount of writing at length is less than should be expected at this stage. Students are not always required to redraft their work when it has been marked carefully. They do, however, benefit greatly from the regular cycle of assessments and comments on their progress. Their logging of independent speaking, reading and listening tasks should be given more prominence.
161. In the current Year 12, standards are average overall and students achieve well. This year, numbers for the AS course have risen greatly to 14. Students are very enthusiastic about their learning and, in one lesson seen, tackled very well a demanding redraft of their corrected homework on agreement of adjectives. The teacher gave a lively PowerPoint introduction and revision of the adjectival rules, assisted ably at one point by a student. Written work is variable in quality, however, reflecting the wide range of ability in the group. A few students are more passive than others, but the teacher gives them additional support and guidance freely.
162. Teaching is very good and students learn very well overall. Teachers prepare very interesting materials that engage students' interest very effectively. In one lesson, students watched a video on an Algerian immigrant's life from childhood to his eventual assimilation into French society through schooling and university. Students were expected to draw out and explain the main stages in his life and the problems encountered by the immigrant. This valuable raising of awareness of French social and political issues has been reinforced for students by their visits to France, and by the foreign language assistant's additional support in developing students' confidence in speaking French.
163. The leadership and management of the course are very good. Teachers are very good role models for the students and impart fully their enthusiasm for the language. They have built up a bank of relevant and up-to-date materials. The cycle of assessments is taken very seriously and students are expected to cooperate fully on deadlines for study and homework. Areas for development include: an appropriate ration of faster French, so as to challenge and test the more talented students' listening skills; and the inclusion in the departmental handbook of accessible information on examination results over time, and approaches to A-level teaching and learning.
164. Recent improvement since the last inspection is good. Teaching has improved and the number of students taking French has risen considerably.

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics and physics were inspected at AS and A2-levels and are reported below. A Year 13 lesson in biology was sampled, in which teaching was good and engaged the students well. In chemistry, one lesson was observed. Teaching was good. Students listened carefully and worked methodically on their practical assignment.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good leadership of the subject, leading to a sense of purpose in all lessons.
- Teaching is very good, with some excellent features.

- There has been a significant increase in the number of students studying mathematics.
- There is increasing use of ICT to extend learning opportunities.
- There is insufficient monitoring of mathematics and the use of number across the sixth form.

Commentary

165. On entry to the sixth form, standards in mathematics are average, and improving, but few students gained A* at GCSE. In the 2003 A level examination, overall standards were also average. The achievements of these students were good compared with their standards at the beginning of Year 12, but generally below achievement in other subjects in the school. Results in 2004 were slightly below those in 2003, especially at AS level. The department has taken positive steps to correct this situation.
166. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was average, but generally better in Year 12 than in Year 13. This is due to the department's increased familiarity with examination requirements, and a much more structured scheme of work issued to both teachers and students. The introduction of a further mathematics course is also helping to raise overall standards. In a Year 12 lesson, students showed an above average understanding of how to 'complete the square', and to sketch the resultant graph. In a Year 13 lesson, by contrast, a number of students found difficulty when applying the equations of motion to projectiles. The number of students studying mathematics has increased significantly, but there are few female students. The retention rate is very good.
167. The quality of teaching is very good. A large number of teachers take AS/A2-level classes, and all possess a good command of their subject. Relationships with students are excellent. Students take pride in the presentation of their work, explaining carefully how they move from one mathematical statement to the next. Lessons are well planned, and include opportunities for students to learn by doing. There is excellent progression in the work in lessons, but occasionally higher-attaining students are not provided with additional work soon enough. Communication skills are improved by regular opportunities for students to demonstrate to their peers how to undertake calculations. However, key words are not consolidated, and writing skills are rarely enhanced other than in presenting coursework. In lesson summaries, there is insufficient emphasis on reinforcing key concepts. The use of ICT to enhance learning opportunities is increasing.
168. There is very effective use of regular assessments to track the progress of individual students. These assessments are thoroughly marked. They provide teachers with guidance about whether students are likely to achieve their target grades, and help in devising possible strategies for improvement.
169. The leadership of the subject is very good, creating very good teamwork, and is supported by good day-to-day management. The revised scheme of work is providing much clearer guidance. However, the increase in the number of mathematics groups requires more emphasis on monitoring the work of teachers and students to ensure consistency across the department. Insufficient consideration is given to the mathematical needs of students across the sixth form, and their skills in the application of number. Since the previous inspection, there has been good progress overall, and standards appear set to rise.

Mathematics across the curriculum

170. The sixth form curriculum does not include key skills provision leading to a qualification in the application of number. For those students not taking AS/A2 level mathematics courses, there is the chance to retake GCSE mathematics in order to improve grades. This is particularly useful for students possessing grades D or E. There is also specific provision in a small number of subjects such as business studies to help students to improve their confidence in manipulating number. However, the mathematics department does not as yet provide a key

skills course, and there is insufficient monitoring of the mathematical needs of all students in the sixth form to ensure that they can benefit fully from the courses they are taking.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of department leads by example in her enjoyment of the subject.
- The scheme of work provides very detailed guidance for teachers and students.
- Teaching is good, and occasionally very good.
- The number of students studying physics has increased significantly.
- The use of ICT is under-developed, but improving.

Commentary

171. Standards in physics on entry to the sixth form are average; most students gained either grade A or B at GCSE. Standards in the Alevel examination in 2003 were also average, and all candidates obtained a grade. Results in 2004 showed a significant improvement in the proportion of students gaining higher grades. This represented good achievement compared with their standards at the beginning of Year 12. Results at AS level in 2004 were generally on target, also indicating good achievement by these students during Year 12.
172. In work seen during the inspection, there was clear evidence of rising standards, towards the nationally expected level. There is an increasing number of students taking physics, and the retention rate is high. There are few female students. In the best lessons, teachers' planning caters well for the wide range of attainment in the class. This ensures that lower attaining students do not lose confidence, whilst providing extra challenge for higher attainers. Students are very positive about their work in class, and in Year 12 they adapt well to the higher-level concepts. However, their preparation for lessons, such as background reading, occasionally lacks dedication. By Year 13, they possess a clear understanding of the concept of binding energy in the nucleus of an atom, and how this relates to Einstein's equation for the relationship between mass and energy.
173. Teachers are experienced and knowledgeable; the standard of teaching is good, and occasionally very good. Mutual respect is evident between teachers and students, leading to a good exchange of ideas about the principles of physics. Students readily volunteer to demonstrate their solutions to calculations to the rest of the class. This helps to improve their communication skills. There is regular use of formulae and graphs; additional help is provided for students who do not study mathematics, for instance in the resolution of forces. The use of ICT is under-developed, but teachers have plans for increasing the availability of hardware within the department.
174. There are in-depth assessments every six weeks, which are thoroughly marked, and graded against AS/A2-level grades. As a result, students know where they are, and what to do to improve. Homework is set regularly, and students are aware of the expectation that this must be completed on time.
175. The curriculum leadership of the subject is very good and its management good. The course is very well planned, with good progression in the work. Teachers and students benefit from the structured scheme of work. Data about students' standards and overall performance are available from Year 6 through to the sixth form, enabling teachers to track the achievement of individual students. Furthermore, recognition of the need to monitor work across the department is helping to improve overall standards.
176. Since the previous inspection, there has been good progress in standards in physics, both in provision and in the results gained in examinations. With the large increase in the numbers of students, and the effective structure established for teaching and learning, there is clear potential for further improvement in the near future.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

ICT courses at AS, A2 and vocational levels were inspected and are reported below.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have considerable expertise in their subject, which enables students to learn very well about its technicalities.
- Very good leadership and management lead to an effective curriculum which raises standards systematically.
- New teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and their development is being well supported.
- A wide range of ICT courses allows students to choose award-bearing courses suited to their abilities.

Commentary

177. Standards in the AS and A2 examinations have varied in the last three years. Currently, results are again improving and in 2002 and 2003 the AS results were excellent. Although there were fewer than the national average at the A grade, the average point score was well above, with all students passing. At A2-level, results dipped to average in 2003, from an excellent level in 2002. Results improved again in 2004.
178. In the AVCE course, results in 2002 were at the national average level; they dropped significantly and were well below average in 2003, but returned to the previous average level in 2004. This group normally contains lower attainers, so the absence of the higher grades is expected.
179. The CISCO course, an industry-sponsored project, is effective, but not award-bearing in terms of points for university entry. It offers an appropriate vocational course for a good number of students, with noteworthy international links between students in this school and the students who attend the course from Soweto, South Africa.
180. The AS results shows that the value added by students was very high compared with their entry level. Although there is not a large number of the most able, skilful teaching helps average students, so that they achieve well above average results. Students achieve very well. Students' ability on entry to the AVCE course is below average, so with results broadly at the national average levels, these students demonstrate good achievement.
181. Teaching is very good in most lessons and never below satisfactory. Teachers have great technical expertise. Enthusiastic teaching by real experts leads to very good learning and response by students. Relationships are very good. Students work well in groups, for example when they discuss the ethical and social issues in the use of ICT. Students are well supported by excellent assessment strategies. These enable them to know where they are in relation to national standards and to raise the quality of their work. Teachers include all the success criteria for the examination courses to extend the rigour of the school's assessment system. Students use ICT well to produce examination coursework projects of high quality. There is good use of the features of word processing to ensure that spelling is accurate, and students' grammar is checked, so overcoming some of their less secure literacy skills.
182. Leadership is very good and produces a very strong structure for cooperation among teachers. There is an excellent range of courses which matches students' different abilities and aspirations. Teachers are supported very effectively, both formally and informally. This leads to very clear and secure learning structures. Teachers too make very good progress in the development of their skills and understanding of the teaching process. The monitoring of the work of the department, and of the performance of students, is excellent. There is good accommodation and very good computer systems. The technical support staff are a very important, integrated part of the team. Although there have been significant changes in staff, good structures have enabled the department to continue to move forward, and in consequence good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

183. When given the opportunity, students are good at applying their ICT skills in the sixth form. They use ICT well as a basic skill and produce well presented coursework fluently and effectively. New students who join the school also pick up ICT skills readily.
184. ICT is well used in many of the subjects inspected. For example, its use in mathematics is increasing. In French, a lively PowerPoint introduction and revision greatly helped students revise a grammar function. In product design, achievement over the two years of the course is very good, mainly because of the development of students' ICT skills. The leisure and tourism course makes very effective use of 'state-of-the art' ICT, such as the 'classroom performance system'. In some other subjects, use of ICT is under-developed, for example in physics, although teachers have plans for increasing the availability of hardware within the department. In history, students do not use the Internet to research topics.
185. Problems with accommodation can limit students' application of their good knowledge. The library is too small for silent study and contains too few computers for the large number of students who could use it. In business studies, accommodation problems lead directly to a lack of ICT because the department's temporary accommodation outside the main building is not secure enough to have computers.

HUMANITIES

AS and A2 courses were inspected in geography and history, and are reported below. Moral philosophy was sampled. Two lessons were seen, in which the quality of teaching and learning was very good and students achieved well. Two lessons were also sampled in sociology, in which teaching and learning were good and students achieved well.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students are well motivated and achieve very well over Years 12 and 13.
 - Very good teaching and effective support result in mostly very good learning.
 - Students obtain great benefit from their fieldwork and practical elements of their courses.
 - Students need to read more widely and rely less on their teacher in lessons.
186. Recent A2-level examination results were above the average when compared with those in all schools. Male students performed well above average, and better than female students. The examination results in 2004 were not as good as previous years, mainly due to a cohort of lower ability students. The AS-level examination results have been close to the average in most years. The retention rate on the AS and A2-level courses, is high.
187. Lessons and the analysis of samples of work show that the standard on the AS-level course is above average and, on the A2-level course, average. This indicates very good achievement over Years 12 and 13 as students' standards on entry to Year 12 were below the average. This is due to teaching of a very good standard, with appropriately high expectations of students, most of whom are conscientious, well motivated and keen to do well. There is no significant difference in the achievement of male and female students. Students in Year 12 have made a good start and are coping well with challenging work, but would benefit from an introductory study skills course. Work on both courses is covered very thoroughly and in detail, but is not sufficiently refined for some students to obtain greatest benefit from it. Critical analyses are progressively and well developed over time, although assignments do not always show an

appreciation of the wider context of the studies undertaken. Best individual course work, based on fieldwork, is of excellent quality.

188. Teaching and learning are mostly very good. Teachers show excellent subject knowledge when presenting topics and when monitoring students' learning. They give effective support to all students, of all abilities, particularly those with statements of special needs. Lessons are thoughtfully planned, structured and organized, with learning well developed through enquiry activities. Students are given good opportunities to contribute to discussion and develop their ideas, but in some classes are reluctant to do so. They rely too much on their teachers in lessons and do not develop their ideas well enough. Lessons have good pace and productivity and teachers' expectations are high. Students use resource materials very well and gain great benefit from practical assignments, particularly fieldwork and investigatory activities.
189. The AS and A2-level courses are very well led and very competently managed. Provision is well co-ordinated, with enthusiastic and experienced staff, who work well together. Accommodation and resources are widely dispersed and there is no sixth form subject base. There are excellent opportunities for students to broaden their subject experiences through a range of school, local, national and international initiatives. There has been good, sustained development since the previous inspection.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement at A level is very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Students from a wide range of ability take the subject at AS-level and most continue to A2.
- Students do not read widely enough.

Commentary

190. A2-level results have fluctuated during the past three years, reflecting the different capabilities of students who opt to study history in the sixth form. Results were above national averages in 2002, but when numbers increased considerably in 2003, they dipped to below average. In 2004 they had recovered to being roughly in line with average levels. However, only one student attained the top A grade in the last two years. Achievement, seen in terms of the progress students have made, has been very good.
191. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of samples of students' work over the past six weeks show that standards are average and that currently achievement is good. Year 12 students, have made a good start to their AS course. Essay writing is of a good standard, though not all students write fluently. It is well structured, with evidence to support individual judgements. Higher attaining students have developed the ability to write sustained and well supported, balanced arguments to justify their conclusions. All have honed their skills in the use of evidence and can analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence effectively. However, students do not read widely or independently enough, They do not therefore appreciate the variety of historical interpretation of events and lack the wider perspective which reading the work of contemporary historians would give them. They do, however, use the Internet to research topics.
192. The quality of teaching is very good and leads to very good learning. Very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for history is used to motivate and inform students. Lessons are planned to provide good opportunities for students to think critically and encourage them to

develop debating skills. They are provided with a wide range of support materials. Assessment is regular and teachers' marking is thorough, with detailed comments designed to improve attainment and maximise potential. Students feel that they are well supported and fully informed of their progress.

193. Leadership and management are very good. The team of sixth form teachers is well led and there is a focus on raising achievement. Monitoring students' performance is a priority and students are well supported. History is a popular subject and numbers remain high. Retention rates for students going on from AS to A2 are also high. Sixth form history was not inspected as a focus in the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

AS and A2 courses in product design were inspected and are reported below.

Product design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students show creativity and precision when designing with a range of tools, from free hand sketching to computers.
- Standards are rising because the team of teachers has been strengthened.
- Students tend to give short answers in discussion, rather than well considered explanations.

Commentary

194. Students take the product design examination. They can choose the materials with which to work. Standards in 2003 A2 examinations were average and rose in 2004. Over the past four years, there has been a 100 per cent pass rate, despite teachers gaining promotion elsewhere and replacements being hard to find.
195. Attainment in Year 12 is above average. Students make good links between their research, designing and manufacturing. However, they are not as confident as they should be when explaining concepts such as energy degradation that underpin lighting projects. Standards of attainment in the work seen in Year 13 are well above average. The students produce a detailed time schedule from which to work, which they adapt, improving their designs. They make effective checks of quality control. However, the quality of students' annotations does not accurately reflect that of their thinking.
196. Given students' average attainment on entry to the sixth form, achievement over the two years of the course is very good, mainly because of their development of ICT skills and very good tutorial support. Students mostly respond very well to their teachers' suggestions for improvement, especially when the discussion was focussed on agreed targets.
197. Teaching and learning are very good. In Year 12, very good questioning, backed up by very good visual aids, enabled the teacher to make students think and reach decisions rapidly. Students value the variety of the course and their very good access to computers. They came up with unusual solutions, an essential capability for a designer. Teaching and learning in Year 13 are very good. Teachers know the students well and have a very good understanding of examination requirements. Students therefore feel confident and anticipate success.
198. Leadership is excellent. Management is very good. The capability of the team, under the same leadership that produced well above average results two years ago, is very good.

Inconsistencies in approach are being addressed. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

AS and A2 level courses were inspected in media studies and are reported below. Lessons were sampled in art, music, music technology and film studies. In art, a range of courses was sampled including AS fine art, AS photography and A-level graphic design. Teaching and learning were good and students' attitudes to their work very positive. One lesson in music and music technology was seen in each of Years 12 and 13, in which students' good achievement resulted from very good teaching and learning. One lesson was seen in film studies in Year 13, in which teaching and learning were very good.

Media studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning lead to well above average standards.
- Students integrate theory and practice very well, resulting in very good achievement.
- Very good leadership and excellent management provide very challenging courses. Excellent relationships result in students working with exceptionally high commitment.
- More links with, and visits to, local media institutions would further enrich learning.

Commentary

199. AS-level examination results have been consistently very high, compared with the national average. Recent A2-level results have been well above average, with female students doing particularly well. These results show excellent achievement when compared with students' prior attainment. Both courses are very popular and retention rates are high.

200. Standards are well above average in Years 12 and 13 and achievement is very good. By the end of Year 13, high-attaining students demonstrate an excellent understanding of the relationship between media theory and practice. These students undertake detailed research and display a very good grasp of critical theory. Average-attaining students recognize the importance of planning and research, and have a clear understanding of genre in their work. Lower-attaining students find some difficulty in linking production with theory and the organisation of their work is weaker, but oral contributions are often good. The best A2-level independent studies are of exceptionally high quality. They are innovative, polished and reflect the taste of target audiences very well. The Year 12 course develops key concepts very well, such as values, convention, moving image, language, and celebrity. The level of evaluation varies, but develops over time. However, few students place their evaluations in the wider context or read enough around the subject, for example in media magazines.

201. Overall, teaching is very good and some excellent teaching was observed. Lessons are meticulously planned. Presentation is structured and focused, so that students understand what they are doing. Lessons develop students' self-knowledge impressively through discussion, group work and independent learning. Relationships are excellent, relaxed but professional and lead to very high student commitment. Expectations are high and teaching challenging. The best lessons are stimulating, lively and enthusiastically presented. Students enjoy their course greatly and speak very highly of the support they receive. More links with local media and work experience would further develop students' understanding of media production and institutions.

202. Leadership is very good and management excellent. Curriculum planning is very thorough and imaginative and sets the scene for teaching of consistently high quality. Assessment is excellent, with students taught to evaluate their own work against examination criteria so they know how to improve it. Accommodation in the media centre is very good. However, with increased popularity and more teaching groups, too much teaching occurs in dispersed accommodation. Developments since the previous inspection have been very good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Leisure & tourism was fully inspected, with leisure & recreation, and is reported below. It was not possible to see any lessons in physical education.

Leisure and tourism

Provision in leisure and tourism is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well because lessons engage their interest.
- Assignments are well constructed, providing guidance for students while allowing choice to pursue individual interests.
- Teachers give students insufficient help in improving their skills of analysis and evaluation.
- Students are keen to do their best because relationships with teachers are very good.

Commentary

203. The school offers an intermediate GNVQ in leisure and tourism and an advanced VCE in leisure and recreation. Results in leisure and tourism were average in 2003 and similar in 2004. Only a small number of students have been entered for leisure and recreation, although the number now taking the subject is much higher. Results were below average in 2003, but higher in 2004.
204. Standards when students enter sixth form leisure and tourism courses are below average. They achieve very well, leading to standards that are above average in the work seen during the inspection and higher than those indicated in recent examinations. Current students are very well motivated by assignments that capture interest and guide learning. Good relationships result in students wanting to do their best for teachers. In many lessons, the pace of learning is increased because students learn from each other by working in small groups.
205. Teaching and learning in leisure and tourism are very good. Students' interest is maintained by varied teaching strategies in most lessons, often making very effective use of 'state-of-the art' ICT, such as the 'classroom performance system'. Approaches are sometimes less varied, particularly when lessons are timetabled away from the vocational area and ICT facilities are not easily accessible. Assignments provide sufficient guidance to ensure that all criteria are met, while allowing choice in investigating areas that particularly interest individual students. Assessment of coursework is well organised and students receive thorough feedback on their performance against grade criteria. However, they are not always given enough encouragement in acquiring higher-order skills, such as analysis and evaluation.
206. Students are very positive about their experience of leisure and tourism and very few fail to complete their courses. They particularly like opportunities to show a mature attitude to their work, yet appreciate the support of teachers if they fall behind. However, they sometimes find preparation for presentations tedious. Students particularly appreciate their approachable and helpful teachers.

207. Leadership and management of leisure and tourism are very good. Teachers work well together as a team in supporting colleagues, particularly when their vocational experience is limited. A key feature in recently improving results is the tightly organised structure for assessing students' work and ensuring that it is completed at the correct time.

208. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Although leisure and tourism was not reported in detail at the last inspection, vocational courses were well taught. Teaching is now very good.

BUSINESS

Courses in AS and A2 business education were inspected, and are reported below.

Business education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching encourages students to work hard and achieve very high standards.
- Knowledgeable and well-organised teachers ensure that students learn very effectively.
- Extremely effective teaching supports students' literacy and numeracy skills. They can express themselves clearly and concisely in examinations and coursework.
- Significant attention is paid to the moral and ethical issues of business, and students develop an in-depth understanding of its effects on peoples' lives.
- Accommodation problems lead to a lack of ICT.

Commentary

209. In the last three years, standards of attainment in the AS and A2 level examinations have been consistently good, and often very good. Often, boys do marginally better than girls. In the 2003 A2 examination, the average points score per student was exactly in line with the national level. All students passed, a better than average outcome. This year again, all students passed with about a quarter gaining A or B grades, continuing a similar pattern.

210. In the AS examination, analysis is more difficult because it is only when students 'cash in' their examination grades that an award is made, and this need not be until Year 13. However, in 2003 the average point score for the school was higher than the national figure, with the number of A and B passes being well above national level, and an above average pass rate. Students have not 'cashed in' their awards this year so far.

211. Business studies are a new area of study for the students because the school no longer offers it in the earlier years. In consequence, students have to come to terms quickly with the nature of the world of commerce and industry. Teaching takes place in the context of current affairs. When considering the low base that students have when they start the course, their achievement is very good. Not only do they progress very well but their literacy and numeracy skills are significantly developed, with a particular focus on preparing to do well in coursework and examinations.

212. Teaching is very good and on occasions excellent. Teachers work well as a team. They are demanding, set a cracking pace to lessons and expect everyone to work right up to the bell. Teaching is also sympathetic. Very good assessment clearly identifies students' strengths and weaknesses. These are tackled by helpful marking which identifies what needs to be done to improve, and by ensuring that in lessons each student is given sufficient individual help to ensure that they can meet their targets. As the course progresses, teachers' expectations rise. This leads to coursework of high quality in Year 13, by which stage students are expected to have the skills to draw together information and give conclusions.

213. The only weakness is the accommodation. The department is housed in temporary accommodation outside the main building, which is not secure enough to hold computers. This limits the range of skills and techniques that the students can apply to their work. For example, in a lesson on break-even points, the lesson cried out for the use of a spreadsheet but the teacher did not have the facilities to use one.
214. Leadership is very good, with very effective teamwork and use of skills. New staff are inducted well and are able to contribute from the very beginning. Management is very good, and assessment systems and the management of learning are fully effective. Although there have been significant changes since the last inspection, with the subject not now taught in Years 10–11, progress has been good because the team is more focussed and effective.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	2	2
How inclusive the school is		1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	2
Overall standards achieved		2
Pupils' achievement	2	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	3	2
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well pupils learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		1
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1	1
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher		1

The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	1	1

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