

# INSPECTION REPORT

**South Wilts Grammar School for Girls**

Salisbury

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126507

Headteacher: Mrs Frances Stratton

Lead inspector: Dr David Benstock

Dates of inspection: 22–26 September 2003

Inspection number: 259190

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (Selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Female
Number on roll:	925
School address:	Stratford Road Salisbury
Postcode:	SP1 3JJ
Telephone number:	01722 323326
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Holland
Date of previous inspection:	16 March 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

South Wilts Grammar School is an 11-18 selective grammar school for girls, and is of average size. It is situated on a pleasant site in the centre of the City of Salisbury. The students come from a very wide area and entry into Year 7 is based on success in the 11+ test. Entry to the sixth form is based on attainment in GCSE examinations but is deliberately aimed at a wider ability group. The large sixth form has shared classes with the boys' grammar school nearby. Few students leave or join the school at other than the usual time. The socio economic background is generally favourable with families often having higher education experience. The school has specialist college status for mathematics and computing and is a Beacon school. The number of students eligible for free school meals is well below average, and very few students are identified as having special educational needs. The number of students with English as an additional language is low.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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19720	Deborah Granville-Hastings	Lay inspector	
18261	Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Art and design Special educational needs
15051	Lynne Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology
15407	Muriel Harrison	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship
32328	Neil Donkin	Team inspector	Religious education
19152	Richard Merryfield	Team inspector	History
22360	Barry Wright	Team inspector	Science and chemistry post16
24887	Yvonne Salmons	Team inspector	Modern languages English as an additional language
18076	Howard Dodd	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Physics post16
31701	Graeme Rudland	Team inspector	Music
27665	Alrene Lees	Team inspector	Music post16
3958	Maureen Cawdron	Team inspector	English
5910	Peter Fletcher	Team inspector	Mathematics
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a very good school with some excellent features. It gives very good value for money.** Standards are well above average at all stages, and very high attainment in GCSE examinations is rising each year at a rate above that found nationally. Students achieve very well throughout including in the sixth form. Teaching and learning are very good and students' attitudes to their studies are excellent. However, the consistency in the use of assessment data in raising achievement requires some improvement. The school is very caring towards its students. The leadership and management of the school are very good and the governing body provides very good support and challenge for the senior team.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Excellent relationships and attitudes of students to study result from a climate of care and support as well as academic success in the school.
- Very high standards of attainment are found in GCSE examinations, well above average compared with similar grammar schools.
- Achievement of students from Year 7 through to Year 11, and in the sixth form, is very good.
- Teaching is very good, especially in the teachers' application of their expertise to motivate and raise expectations of students in their learning.
- There is a lack of consistency by departments in systematic and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching, and in the use of assessment data to monitor students' progress.
- The Senior Team provide very good leadership and management and the governing body gives excellent guidance in shaping the direction of school development.
- Provision for the teaching of citizenship through departments is not yet well enough planned or implemented.

Since the school was last inspected in 1998 there have been good improvements. In responding to the key issue identified at that time, teaching now embraces more stimulating and challenging methods than previously found, although there is need of further development in some subjects. Standards of attainment have been maintained at a high level and results at GCSE are rising at a higher rate than they are nationally. Monitoring of teaching has improved and reviews of department practice have been carried out but there remain inconsistencies in practice, in both monitoring of teaching and student assessment.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A*	A*	A*	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	n/a	A	A	

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

**Achievement of students is very good overall.** Standards of attainment overall in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 in 2002 were very high compared with all schools and well above average compared with similar grammar schools; results in English were better than mathematics or science. In the GCSE examinations results overall in 2002, were also in the top five per cent of schools nationally (A\*) and well above average compared with similar schools; high performance

was found in English, drama, French, geography and science. Results in 2003 have been maintained at the same high level. Standards in the sixth form in 2002 were well above the national average, and students achieve very well at all stages because of the very good teaching and high expectations.

**Students' attitudes to school and learning are excellent.** The behaviour of students is excellent and relationships with teachers are a major contributory element to the very good achievement. Attendance is very good and students are punctual to lessons. Personal development, supported by spiritual, moral social and cultural understanding, is good. Students have developed a very strong sense of moral purpose and show respect for others' views. The citizenship programme currently makes insufficient contribution to this aspect, but is under review. Spiritual development is very good. Appreciation of multicultural issues is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of the education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are very good at all stages including the sixth form.** There is a very high level of consistency in the good or very good teaching across most subjects. The learning is very good because teachers use their high level of expertise to motivate and extend students, and students' aspirations are high. There is a good academic curriculum in place and opportunities for extra-curricular activities provide very worthwhile enrichment. Excellent links have been established with the community and with other schools, including those through its work as a Beacon School, and Specialist Mathematics and Computing College.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management of the school are very good.** The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is very good. The management overall is good. Very effective practices are in place at whole-school level, but there is inconsistency in the monitoring of teaching and learning, and in the use of assessment data across departments. The governing body provides very good expertise for strategic planning.

## **PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Overall, parents are very pleased with the school. Approximately 220 parents completed a questionnaire. Ninety-two percent of these appreciate the high quality of teaching, and ninety-eight percent value the support the school provides for students. However, only sixty-eight per cent of the responses indicated satisfaction about how well the school seeks parents' views or takes account of suggestions or concerns. Students are positive about many aspects of the school. They appreciate most that teachers expect them to work hard and do their best. A small but significant number of sixth form students did not agree that their work was assessed helpfully.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Improve the consistency and rigour of departmental monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- Improve the use of assessment data to monitor students' progress and set targets for achievement.
- and, to meet statutory requirements:
- Ensure that the full requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study for citizenship are fulfilled.
- Provide religious education in the sixth form.

- Provide a daily act of collective worship.
- Ensure that access to buildings fulfils the requirement of the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Ensure that all information as required by statute is provided in the school governors' annual report.

## OVERALL EVALUATION

### **The effectiveness of the sixth form is very good and is cost effective in its provision.**

Standards of attainment overall are well above average in comparison with national averages and achievement of students is very good. The shared teaching with the boys' school ensures a very full range of subjects, shared opportunities for enrichment and economical class sizes to ensure provision is cost effective. Results, year-to-year, vary owing to variations in individual ability, and there is no identified trend.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Well above average overall standards of attainment and very good achievement.
- Entry is open to a wider ability range of students.
- Very good opportunities for enrichment.
- Very good teaching and learning.
- High levels of attendance and excellent attitudes to study.
- Inconsistency in monitoring and evaluation of teaching in departments.

In keeping with the main school, the sixth form has continued to improve and the quality of the teaching has developed to be more stimulating in response to the issue in the previous report.

## 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	<b>Very good</b> in English Literature and <b>good</b> in French
Mathematics	<b>Good</b>
Science	<b>Good</b> in chemistry and physics
Information and communication technology	<b>Good</b>
Humanities	<b>Very good</b> in geography, history, and psychology
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Very good</b> in design and technology. Provision is very good in the two areas offered - food technology and product design
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Very good</b> in art and in music.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<b>Good</b> in physical education

*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.*

## ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Very good advice is provided, especially in preparation for careers and higher education

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

The leadership and management of the sixth form are integral to that of the whole school and are very good.

### **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students are very pleased with the sixth form, in particular that their courses suit their aspirations and abilities. They were least happy with the extent to which the school sought their views.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall standards of attainment are very high compared with all schools and well above average compared with similar schools. It is well above average in the sixth form. Achievement at all stages is very good.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards overall in the National Tests in Year 9 in 2002 in English, mathematics and science were very high compared with all schools and well above average compared with similar schools.
- The progress made by students from Year 6 to Year 9 in 2002 was very high.
- Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were well above the average in similar grammar schools.
- GCSE results have risen each year at a rate above the national trend.
- Advanced level results are overall well above the national average.
- Students achieve very well as a result of the very good teaching.
- Standards in 2003 at GCSE were particularly high in English, geography, French and religious education, and less good in physical education and art and design.

#### Key Stage 4

##### *Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002*

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	100 (100)	50 (48)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per student	69.5 (69.0)	39.8 (39.0)

*There were 128 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

#### Commentary

1. In the National Curriculum tests in 2002 for Year 9, the overall attainment of students in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science was very high compared with all schools and well above average compared with similar grammar schools. In English and mathematics all students gained level 6 or higher and most gained level 7 or 8. The overall performance was very high in English, above average in science, and broadly average in mathematics compared with similar schools. These standards have remained high over recent years, improving in line with the national trend.
2. When students enter the school, their performance in tests in Year 6 has been well above average and they are selected on the basis of success in entrance examinations. They go on to achieve very well between Years 7 and 9, especially in English, and measures of progress based on their performance in Year 9 tests, are high compared with all schools and well above average compared with similar schools.

3. In 2003, results continue to be at a high level. The percentage of students at level 7 and above, however, has improved in science and mathematics compared with 2002 and in English remains high. In other subjects, in 2003, performance was notably good in Year 9 teacher assessments in information and communication technology (ICT), history, geography and art & design. Lower performance was recorded in design & technology, religious education and physical education.
4. Results overall in the GCSE examinations in 2002, were very high in comparison with all schools and well above average compared with similar schools. The percentage gaining five or more grades A\* to C, was very high compared with similar grammar schools. Over the past three years, results have continued at a high level, and have risen at a rate above the national trend. The school sets itself challenging targets and meets or exceeds them.
5. The achievement of students based on their progress, from the Year 9 tests to Year 11 examination results, is well above the national average. Results in 2002 were particularly high in modern languages. In 2003, the percentage of grades A or A\* was very high in English, drama, geography, science and languages. Relatively lower performance was found this year in art & design, physical education, history and design & technology.
6. The work seen in lessons and the analysis of students' work reflects the high standards found in the tests and examinations. In English, students are articulate and mature orally and write with lively versatility. They make sophisticated use of vocabulary, especially in Years 10 and 11, but are still rather prone to technical inaccuracies. Their achievement in English is very good and overall standards of literacy across the school are well above average.
7. In mathematics, students achieve well in response to the high level of challenge from teachers. Development of competence in numeracy is very good in Years 7 to 9, and students' skills in problem solving are extended well in Years 10 and 11. Standards of numeracy overall are very high.
8. In science, students progress well and develop their investigative skills at a similar rate as their knowledge and understanding of the subject. The achievement of students is greater in Years 10 and 11 in response to demanding tasks.
9. The very few students on the special educational needs database achieve very well in lessons overall, in line with others in their classes. They are well known to teachers, who provide very good support based on the very good, well informed guidance from the special needs co-ordinator
10. Gifted and talented students are challenged appropriately in the majority of departments and they achieve very high standards. In some areas of science in Years 7 to 11, they are not extended as effectively as they might be, although high standards are achieved. The physical education department does not always exploit the talents of its students and students to full effect.

### **Sixth form**

#### ***Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2002***

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	98.7	94.8
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	60.2	39.4
Average point score per student	326.8 (278.0)	263.3 (n/a)

*There were 137 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

11. In 2002, results in the GCE Advanced level examinations were well above national average. They were very high in English literature, psychology and general studies and well above average in many others, with slightly lower performance in physical education and French. Results in GCE Advanced Subsidiary level were also high.
12. Students achieve very well in the sixth form. The wider range of ability intake leads to a wider range of examination results but individual students, sometimes with modest GCSE results, make very good progress towards their A level attainment.
13. A limited provision is made for Key Skills in Year 12, essentially in ICT. Progress towards a level 2 vocational qualification is good.

### **Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Students' attitudes to school and to learning are excellent. They show a genuine desire to learn and to do their best, responding very well to the high standards expected of them. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is also excellent, as are relationships between students and between students and staff. Attendance is very good and directly contributes to the high standards and achievement of students.

The attitudes, values and behaviour of sixth form students are also excellent. Their attendance and punctuality are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

#### **School**

- Students have excellent attitudes to their work and learning.
- Behaviour of students in lessons and around school is excellent and there have been no exclusions.
- Relationships are excellent and create an environment in which students are confident, self-assured and encouraged to do their best.
- Students respond very well to the opportunities to contribute to the running of the school.
- Attendance is very good and directly contributes to students' high standards and achievement.

#### **Sixth form**

- Students have excellent attitudes to their work, often showing much independent research to extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Responsibility and contribution towards the running of the main school is excellent, with most students taking an active role in helping others.
- Behaviour is excellent, with no exclusions.
- Attendance is very good and lessons begin on time.

#### **Commentary**

14. The school clearly promotes a great desire to learn through its strong ethos, clear messages and very high expectations. This is well known before students begin in the school and for many is the reason that students and their parents want to be at this school. In lessons, students show tremendous interest in and enthusiasm for their learning. They often work together co-operatively, asking questions of their own, sharing ideas and have a lively enthusiasm for the subjects. They like to succeed, enjoy being busy and respond well to being stretched and challenged. Many students take part in the range of clubs and activities and

really enjoy being at school. These positive attitudes contribute directly to the amount of work achieved in lessons and the high standards overall.

15. Behaviour of students in lessons and around school is excellent and results in an atmosphere in which learning is maximised. There have been no exclusions in recent years and detentions are few. Students show great self-discipline and rise to the trust and responsibility invested in them. They live and work in an environment where respect and tolerance for others are paramount and this quickly becomes a natural way of life. Relationships between students and between students and staff are excellent. This creates an atmosphere in which students feel valued and they are confident and self-assured as a result.
16. There are many opportunities for students to take on responsibility within their lessons, tutor groups and the school as a whole and they tackle these with relish. In lessons students love to work independently and in groups, often shaping the direction of the lesson with their views and questions. In tutor groups, many students take an active role, for example through being form captains, games captains, charity or school council representatives. Students identify strongly with the school and feel they have an important role to play in its development.
17. Attendance is very good and consistently higher than other schools nationally and locally. Unauthorised absence is extremely rare and parents and carers are strongly committed to the school's high expectations. Punctuality is excellent and no learning time is lost through lessons beginning late.

**Attendance in 2002-2003 (%)**

Authorised absence	
School data	3.9
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	1.2

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

18. The attitudes and values of sixth form students are also excellent. They approach their studies with maturity and great interest, often spending much time on independent research to further their understanding. Their enthusiasm for learning and wanting to do as well as possible inspires them to great intellectual effort. Students are expected to play an important and active part in the running of the school and they do so willingly, organising many day-to-day routines and events, which help and support students and staff extremely well. The sixth form committee, prefects and other representatives play a pivotal role in the school day. Many students take part in schemes such as Duke of Edinburgh awards and Young Enterprise and handle the challenges with commitment and maturity. Attendance and punctuality in the sixth form are very good, although very occasionally students arrive late when travelling from the partner school.
19. The school is very good at developing its students' attitudes, values and personal qualities through its approach to spiritual, moral, social development. At all times, students show respect for each other, for staff and for the school community. They value other people's contributions to a discussion. Students take an active part in the life of their forms and in assemblies. Sixth form students are involved in all aspects of school life. The school promotes a positive and highly moral ethos: students respond to the active encouragement to take on responsibility. Students are confident, articulate and show self-awareness. The school develops an appreciation of the students' own culture but does not consistently raise their understanding of other cultures. The religious education department enables students to

consider their spiritual dimensions but opportunities are missed to do this in collective worship and in other areas of the curriculum.

**Ethnic background of students 2003****Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	844	0	0
White – any other White background	14	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	5	0	0

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL****Teaching and Learning**

Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school including the sixth form. Overall, assessment is good but there is inconsistency between departments on the use of assessment to monitor students' performance.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have an excellent level of expertise in their subjects, which is used to set high expectations and challenge for students.
- Students' attitudes to work and their behaviour are managed consistently at a high level, resulting in excellent relationships, productivity of work and pursuit of knowledge.
- Assessment is used well in some subjects to support and improve students' achievement but is less well developed in others.
- Students show an exceptional degree of self-motivation, maturity and independence in their learning that arises from the culture and ethos within the school.
- In the majority of subjects, teachers plan lessons very well, ensure an appropriate challenge for students of different abilities and choose a variety of methods to stimulate learning.
- The quality of teaching of citizenship is satisfactory overall, but there is insufficient planning or implementation of the programme of study in this area.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 150 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
18(12%)	71(47%)	41(28%)	18(12%)	2(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 rounded percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

20. There is very little difference in the quality of teaching between different year groups, which is overall very good. Teachers adapt their skills very well to the age of the students but are relentless in setting demanding objectives for students' achievement. At the same time, they demonstrate exceptional care and support for students in their learning. High expectations are made of students of all students with very good support given to those who need it.
21. In the majority of lessons observed, the style of teaching stimulates very active discussion and debate. The level of challenge being high contributes significantly to very good achievement of most students. This represents a marked improvement of teaching in the school where such qualities were reported as not being consistently found in the previous inspection. There are high expectations of brisk learning in most subjects, although in science there is insufficient challenge for the most able students.
22. The quality of teaching is consistently good or very good across most subjects, with the exception of citizenship, which is just satisfactory. This new subject has yet to be properly established, planned and implemented. In comparison with other subjects, teaching and learning, whilst still good, are not quite so successful in science, ICT in Years 10 and 11, and music in Years 7 to 9.
23. Teachers have a high level of subject expertise and also knowledge of the examination system and requirements. They instil a high level of confidence and drive in students, at even the youngest age, which results in exemplary behaviour and determined ambition. Planning is at least good, except in physical education, for which it is satisfactory and citizenship, for which it is unsatisfactory.
24. Literacy is developed well in most subjects, with good strategies in place to extend the use of language. Mathematical skills at a high standard are practised extensively in some subjects but opportunities are lost in others. All departments encourage the use of ICT by students, but lack of access to suitable hardware can be a barrier to high achievement.

#### Year 9 - Exemplary practice in design and technology

The Year 9 graphics group's challenge was to think commercially as the designers of a house. This graphics unit provided an inspiring vehicle for the development of citizenship, basic literacy, mathematical and ICT skills, plus excellent personal development through teamwork. Community research, seeking advice from estate agents and parents, gave students experience in the format and jargon used to tempt customers into the housing market. Passionate group discussions on green issues and evaluation of the quality of developers' packs of information extended knowledge. Concise accurate descriptions about their proposed house raised the enjoyment and challenge of planning a property to fit the prescribed space. Environment issues around social housing and community need were considered.

Armed with tape measures, students were encouraged to go out into the grounds and map the proposed size of the ground floor of their house. Students found it easy to work with the mathematical concept of space and scale through practical investigation. Soon accurate ground floor plans began to emerge. Interesting homework moved students towards planning building elevations, and methods of rendering. Completed projects on display inspired students to improve the quality of their graphics presentation. The excellent results proved that purposeful realistic approaches to graphics sparked lateral thinking, involving cross-curricular skills and

engaging students in impressive, reflective group work and powerful learning techniques for their future designing.

25. Excellent use is made of assessment in design & technology to monitor students' progress and to ensure they are aware of how they can improve. It is also used effectively to influence the curriculum. In English, there is also very effective use of assessment to diagnose individual students' needs. However, there is inconsistency across departments, in the extent to which assessment data is utilised or recorded. In some subjects, notably mathematics, modern languages, music and citizenship, assessment is less well used and opportunities are not taken well enough to identify achievement in relation to national expectations or set appropriate targets for students. Within subjects with good overall practice, there is still inconsistency in the marking, and use of assessment data by teachers.
26. The senior leadership team has made a significant impact on the quality of teaching. Training and opportunities for shared good practice have contributed greatly to the greater range of style that has produced more stimulating teaching. Departments have yet to monitor the teaching quality with enough rigour to identify where teachers' skills can be developed even further.

### **Sixth form**

27. The sixth form has shared teaching arrangements with the boys' grammar school and classes are mixed. Teaching of a number of subjects is shared between the two schools.
28. The general very good quality of teaching and learning that has been established in Years 7 to 11 is extended into the sixth form. Teachers' knowledge of the subject requirements at GCE Advanced level ensure that the students are fully extended and challenged to achieve the highest grades at examinations.
29. Teaching in some areas of the curriculum is less productive. In ICT, teaching is well informed, but there is insufficient variety in teaching method, which can depress students' progress. In mathematics, some teaching is seen to be of a routine nature and lacks the stimulation found in other subjects. In chemistry and physics, the level of support for students who have difficulty with the concepts, is insufficient, leading to some demotivation and students' concern

### **Year 13 - Exemplary practice in history**

TITLE: "Mussolini's foreign policy, between the invasion of Corfu in 1923 and the war with Abyssinia in 1935, was remarkably successful" how far do you agree with this assessment?

OBJECTIVE: This very well conceived, planned and supported activity was targeted at Year13 history groups at the beginning of their A2 course. It was designed to give students an insight into how A2 essays differ in style, concept, content and length from their AS experience.

DESCRIPTION: Two groups had previously planned and word-processed individual essays on the above title. The teacher cut up the essays into constituent paragraphs and separated the first sentence of each paragraph. Each

pair of students then worked on essays (from the other group for reasons of sensitivity), matching the first sentence of each paragraph with the rest of it. They had then to select the introductory and concluding paragraphs and correctly order the remaining paragraphs, sticking the completed essay onto sugar paper. From the completed essay they had to deduce the writer's essay plan, which could be compared with the original. They then used essay mark sheets to assess how successful the essay was and a mark scheme to award it a level. In the plenary students were able to offer valuable critical comment on 'their' essays about poorly defined questions, misleading introductions and conclusions, timing, irrelevance and lack of analysis.

SUMMARY: The lesson was an unqualified success. Students of all ability levels found it both stimulating and challenging and they reported that it opened their eyes to the problems of A2 essay writing!

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is broad and provides well for the needs and requirements of students in this school. The shared teaching arrangements in the sixth form enable a wide range of options. Very good provision is made for students with special educational needs. Personal, social and health education is very good, but citizenship is not yet established within subjects. All students have equality of access to the curriculum. Accommodation in many areas is unsatisfactory.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school's curricular provision is highly appropriate for the learning needs of its students, and reflects parents' wishes.
- Personal social and health education is very well planned and efficiently taught.
- The teaching of citizenship needs to have a formal structure within all schemes of work and lesson plans.
- The school does not meet its statutory requirements to ensure adequate teaching of religious education in the sixth form or to provide a daily act of collective worship across the school.
- Every subject in the school is taught by well-qualified, specialist teachers.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory for some subject areas and for sixth form study.

## **Commentary**

30. The curriculum of the school is mainly academic in response to the well above average ability of its students and to the wishes of parents. The school is inclusive; students and sixth form students, including those with special educational needs, have full access to all study opportunities. The governors' curriculum committee has highlighted the 14 – 19 curriculum as an area for development and the school is responding well; for example by planning GCSE and AS Level in ICT courses from September 2004, by enabling students to drop modern languages or design and technology in Years 10 and 11, and by ensuring good continuity between courses in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form.
31. In Years 7 – 11 curriculum provision is good overall. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught in Years 7 – 9 and option choices generally match students' learning needs in Years 10 and 11, providing good continuity of learning. Provision is very good for design and technology, where all students benefit from a wide range of resources and very good support from teachers. In art, the use of a wide range of media contributes to students' good achievement; and in geography, students participate in a comprehensive programme of visits, fieldwork, and make very good use of the local environment.
32. Personal social and health education (PSHE) is very well planned and efficiently taught. Although the school has an academic curriculum, it provides very good opportunities for students to develop their interests in the world of work. In Years 10 and 11, students receive very good preparation for later stages of study and employment through the careers component of PSHE, with assistance from visiting specialists and the part time careers advisor. Additionally, all students participate in the work experience programme in Year 10. Time given to religious education in Years 7 – 9 has increased since the last report and provision is now good. History has insufficient time in Year 7. Although provision of citizenship is satisfactory overall, the teaching requirements are not met because this is not formalized within all schemes of work and in lesson planning.
33. The school does not meet its statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship that is wholly or mainly Christian.

34. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall and has a negative impact on students' learning. There is a lack of space in many teaching areas, for example in drama, music, indoor physical education, and history. A relatively small proportion of science teaching takes place in non-specialist rooms but this does not have a significant impact on students' learning. Sixth form students have insufficient areas for private study. For design and technology and modern languages, accommodation is unsatisfactory; in design technology, students have too little space to conduct experiments adequately and in modern languages the very poor acoustics distort the sound of recorded exercises. Apart from these two examples, there is no clear evidence that accommodation problems adversely affect the students' learning, but this is due to the determined effort that teachers and students make to overcome them. There is no access to the upper floors for the disabled. There are separate disabled toilet facilities. Currently there are no disabled students on the register.
35. Staffing is very good overall and meets the needs of the curriculum well. The well-qualified specialist teachers teach enthusiastically, resulting in students' very good achievement. Support staff make a very good contribution to students' learning; in German and French, language assistants support students' speaking practice; in design and technology, ICT and science, technicians contribute well to the smooth running of the departments; and the librarian and careers adviser provide knowledgeable support for study and careers choice. The administrative staff efficiently ensure the smooth running of the school day.
36. Resources for most subjects are satisfactory. For design and technology, resources are good; there are modern laser-cutting tools and specialist computer software, and for physical education outdoor facilities are very good. However, the provision of computers in most departments is inadequate. Most are outdated, and too few have Internet connection, restricting students' access to informative support material. The library provides a wide range of reference books, particularly in business studies and design technology, and students use the resources room well for research on the Internet; however, the facilities are inadequate for the numbers of students in the school. Additional resources have been purchased since the last inspection, notably adjustable chairs for the ICT department, and improved equipment for physics.
37. The provision for students with special educational needs is very good. Very good records are kept of the few who are deemed in need of curriculum support and departments are kept well informed of their specific needs and recommended response to them. There is a separate confidential register of those with special medical needs. Appropriate use is made of specialist services.
38. A register of gifted and talented students is opened in the first few weeks of entry at Year 7. Subject departments are expected to add their own names to this list, based on emerging evidence as the students settle in. Teachers challenge and extend the gifted and talented through such opportunities as membership of the schools' choir and orchestras. The provision for gifted and talented students and students varies between departments, but is generally very good, with some weaknesses in the physical education and science departments. Not all departments offer specific extension and enrichment opportunities. All students are included within mainstream classes and benefit from the very good provisions for teaching and learning offered by the school.
39. The school offers a very good range of activities, which extend and enhance the taught curriculum. There is a range of regular clubs available, including drama and music groups, sporting activities, and the Christian Union. Extra-curricular activities in music are outstanding, and the good provision in PE is being broadened in response to requests from students.
40. There is very good provision in mathematics where a number of activities and challenges take place during the year. Students run some aspects, such as the geography club and some music or drama activities. All students are engaged each year in a community related activity.

41. There is a wide range of activities, which take students out of school. These are carefully planned to support students' learning in a number of subjects of the curriculum. Such activities include geography field trips, visits to France and Germany, science visits, and trips to historical sites. Currently, 127 students are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and an annual activities week facilitates a further range of curriculum-related activities and visits.
42. Departments offer an open access policy, which enables students to work after school and at lunchtimes. Teachers provide support when specific needs arise. Form tutors keep a log of the involvement of students in school clubs. There is no overall strategic monitoring and evaluation of this uptake.

### **Sixth form**

43. In the sixth form, the curriculum is very good. Although students of a wider ability range now have access to the sixth form, the curriculum remains largely academic, in response to the students' needs and aspirations. Joint provision with the boys' grammar school has resulted in a wide range of GCE AS and Advanced Level courses. PSHE provides very good advice and guidance for future careers and study. There are currently no vocational courses on offer, but awareness of the world of work is promoted, for example, in business education, and work experience in Germany and France for keen linguists.
44. The provision for religious education in the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school's support and care for students are **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very well organised individual care and attention given to the health and welfare of all students and staff.
- Students have very good access to internal and external systems for support, advice and guidance about their academic and personal development including their future careers.
- There are very good induction arrangements at Year 7.
- Some inconsistencies in assessment across all subjects impede academic success.

### **Commentary**

45. Very clear and inclusive arrangements made for child protection across the school are in line with the local county arrangements. There are two responsible officers to monitor child protection procedures and all staff are made aware of their individual roles through training days.
46. Very good routines for health and safety operate within a very effective health and safety policy which is monitored by governors working in conjunction with the senior management team, teaching staff and the site manager. The school has more than the required number of first aiders and access to a very supportive school nurse, which ensures an excellent response to health issues. There are very good risk assessment procedures in many practical

areas, and arrangements for school trips and work experience are exemplary, but monitoring of risk assessment across the school is inconsistent. Some departments rely on an external

audit rather than a departmental team approach. Insufficient storage in many departments constrains free flow of movement around the classroom, which restricts independent learning.

47. The school vigorously promotes very good attitudes to healthy living through work in curriculum areas such as food technology, PSHE and physical education, plus philosophy in the sixth form. These issues are often debated in the school council and students felt that monitoring the healthy eating aspect of the school canteen and tuck shop would strengthen the healthy message. This is a further illustration of students' confidence to raise their own views and concerns.
48. The school collaborates effectively with the majority of parents. The excellent arrangements for students' personal health issues, mentioned earlier, illustrate parent confidence and supports comments in the parents' questionnaire. The school nurse and the senior first aider hold confidential details of any important health concerns. Parents are very conscientious in keeping these records up to date and informing the school about changes in their children's medication, which reinforces the school's scrupulous health routines.
49. Relationships within all aspects of the school are excellent. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of students' overall strengths and needs for improvement. Effective tutor groups, very well informed and proactive heads of year and regular testing all feed into the systems. Students receive useful and well-considered advice and guidance where necessary and their personal development is monitored very well.
50. The diverse groups of partner primary schools provide good information to aid the smooth transition of students from junior to senior school. A very good induction programme that ensures friendship groups are nurtured as well as students being encouraged to make new friends. Very comprehensive personal advice from tutors, the careers adviser, as well as a rich computer and careers reference section in the library ensure that students can access information to inform the next stage of their education.
51. Processes for seeking students' views are very good. Students' ideas are taken seriously. The concern of some students in the questionnaires that the school does not listen to them is unjustified. Reviews of students opinions about courses are carried out in some departments, for example modern languages and design and technology and modifications to the curriculum are made.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

Links with the community are **excellent** and make a strong contribution to students' learning experiences. Links with other schools are **excellent** and there is a genuine professional dialogue, which is improving the quality of learning for students in many schools. The school seeks and values parents' support and has a **very good** partnership with them.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Excellent involvement of local businesses and expertise support the curriculum very well
- Excellent links with other schools strengthen the curriculum
- Management of Beacon and Specialist status projects is very good – dynamic and far-reaching for this school, other schools and wider community
- School is very aware of its strengths and actively works towards improving education for others through sharing professional learning
- The school has very good links with all parents, including those of sixth form students, in which the shared vision is clearly communicated to parents and fully supported.

## **Commentary**

52. The school has an excellent partnership with its local community. The governing body has a variety of backgrounds and brings specialist expertise to the running and development of the school. Local businesses and industries play an important part in broadening the experiences of students through such projects as industry days, science days and the careers and work experience programmes, where their contribution is carefully planned into the curriculum. Students work alongside people from national and local charities throughout the year and particularly in the Charities Fair. In the school's recent bid to gain Specialist College status, they received tremendous support from local businesses, which pledged large sums of money to back the proposed developments. Such impressive links play a large part in preparing students for life after school.
53. The school has developed excellent relationships with other schools in the area to the benefit of students and teachers. The school is very aware of its strengths and actively works towards improving education locally through sharing professional learning. As a part of the work as a Beacon school, help has been given to other schools to evaluate and develop the management of subjects and teaching and learning styles. This happened in many subjects and is particularly impressive within mathematics and English. The Enigma project caught the imagination of not only the students directly involved but staff and parents too. The work connected with being a Specialist College is just beginning but the impact is already being felt. The management of the Beacon school status and the bid for Specialist College Status has been dynamic and very effective in improving the current and potential learning environment of many people.
54. The school has very good relationships with parents and genuinely values their support. Parents' views are often sought and show that parents are highly satisfied with and have total confidence in the school. The extent of this support is evident in the amount of money many parents want to donate to support the Specialist College development.
55. Much of the information that parents receive about the school is very good and they gain a clear understanding of the philosophy, beliefs and day-to-day aspects of school life. Parents receive good information of their children's progress through the termly grades, full report and consultation evening. The quality of the comments in the report varies. At best, comments clearly indicate how well students are doing and give practical targets that can help students improve. Some comments are more general and, whilst supportive and encouraging, do not give targets that are specific and practical enough to help students understand how they can improve. Some parents would prefer to receive the reports a little earlier to enable them to have time to respond before the end of the school year. Staff are very quick to contact home to discuss any concerns and also to praise and acknowledge achievement and success.
56. Some subject departments go to great lengths to explain to parents how learning can be supported at home. For example, the mathematics department has organised workshops for parents of primary school students in Years 6, as well as Year 7 and 8 students to help them understand the way mathematics is now taught and how parents can help at home.

## **Sixth form**

57. The joint provision with the boys' grammar school for some sixth form courses is well managed and monitored and greatly benefits students from both schools. Students have a greater choice of specialist courses and a broader social experience as a result. Both schools have reviewed and amended their school day timetable and reporting structure, and communication between the schools is very good. For most students, including those from other schools, the move to sixth form life is smooth and they settle in quickly.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. Governors give very good support and excellent guidance towards future planning.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and effective management by the headteacher and senior staff, who have a clear vision for the future.
- The governors played a decisive role in shaping the school by their appointment of the current head.
- The school 's specialist status is already having an impact on its work.
- The openness of the school 's leadership and management has a clear influence on the outstanding relationships between staff throughout the school.
- Assessment practices are not as consistent, comprehensive and analytical as they could be across the school as a whole.
- Inconsistency in the implementation of the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching across departments.

### Commentary

58. At the time of the inspection the current headteacher had been in post for only three weeks, taking over from the previous, well-established head of this successful school. The leadership, both of the headteacher, and of the senior management team, is very good. There is a clear vision for the future of the school that may be encapsulated by the phrase "academic excellence in a caring community", which is to be achieved through "openness, involvement and the centralisation of information systems, structures and procedures". This sense of purpose is clearly shared by other key staff who are seeking to achieve "success through change".
59. The school benefits from the examples set by the headteacher and senior managers, who are very hard working and committed to the school, which leads to harmonious relations between the staff as a whole. Plans are well advanced to improve accommodation, using funds from the school's successful bid for specialist status. Review and evaluation of management practices and roles are being undertaken.
60. Governors consider carefully their intentions and vision for the future of the school. They have been very clear about the type of school and the nature of the provision, and have been exceptionally instrumental in shaping their vision. They are very supportive to the senior managers and provide opportunities for open discussion and debate. Most are very aware of the strengths and limitations of the school. The governing body fulfils most of its statutory duties but there are aspects that do not fully comply with legal requirements. These include the provision of religious education in the sixth form and daily collective worship for all students. There are also minor omissions from the Governors' Annual Report.
61. There are strengths in leadership and management at departmental level and in the majority of subjects these are very good. Departmental reviews by the leadership team have contributed to improvements in teaching style and achievement but the monitoring of teaching and learning is inconsistent across departments. In a number of subjects including art, ICT and science monitoring has not been fully implemented on a sufficiently rigorous basis. There are also variations in assessment practices between departments, which undermines the consistency, and clarity to students.

62. The performance management of teachers is well established. The school does not, as yet, evaluate its impact on school improvement. Performance management for non-teaching staff started in September 2003. The school provides very good access to professional development opportunities for all its staff. It supports staff who are new to the school very effectively. In addition, it gives newly qualified teachers appropriate non-contact time and monitoring to enable them to make a successful start to their teaching. The school has a partnership with Southampton University to provide initial teacher training. Its practices for the recruitment, retention and deployment of staff are effective. It has made good progress in implementing the workload agreement.
63. The school's financial management is effective. It allows teachers to concentrate on teaching, seeks best value for money, and has accurately matched its expenditure to its income in recent years. The recent successful bid for Specialist School Status links the educational priorities to budget expenditure. The school does not do this for its school development plan. Also, it has not yet implemented the recommendations of a recent auditor's report.

### **Sixth form**

64. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The current postholder is an experienced teacher who has been responsible for this area for many years but her role was defined as a purely pastoral one. The head of sixth form and new headteacher are united in expanding this role to include a responsibility for the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching. A significant part of sixth form leadership and management is managing the developing link with Bishop Wordsworth's boys' school. The two schools co-operate effectively together at this level and this has significantly expanded the curricular options open to sixth form students.

### ***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,806,760
Total expenditure	2,791,780
Expenditure per student	3,130

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	463
Balance carried forward to the next	15,443

# **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**

- Consistently high results and well above average standards reflect a high level of achievement.
- Students achieve very well because of very good teaching and learning.
- Highly-motivated students with a good ethos of learning also contribute significantly to their own success.
- Strong leadership has created an effective, committed team of teachers.
- The introduction of Literacy Strategy principles has led to an improvement in teaching styles in Years 7 to 9.
- More frequent monitoring of teaching is needed to ensure greater consistency.

#### **Commentary**

65. Results at the end of Year 9 have improved since 1998. Those in 2002 were very high compared with other grammar schools, while those in 2003 show a similar pattern. These very high standards are reflected in the work seen. Students are confident speakers, responsive and attentive listeners, read with ease and very good comprehension, while their writing shows vigour and developing versatility. GCSE English and English literature results have been consistently high in relation to national norms. Students are articulate and mature orally, they respond intelligently when reading texts, and produce a range of confident, coherent writing showing both creativity and good analytical skills.
66. Students' very good achievement is directly linked to the very good and occasionally excellent teaching they receive, and to their own positive attitudes. Teachers have a good command of their subject, are very experienced, and several serve as professional examiners. The work they set is usually very demanding; even Year 7 students say they find it challenging. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy principles in Years 7 to 9 has led to curriculum re-planning and changing teaching styles. Lessons now have greater pace, more variety, and students' interest is sustained. The strategy's principles are not as well applied to lessons in Years 10 to 11 and beyond, as they might be. In a few less successful lessons, planning is not so rigorous; the learning agenda is not shared with students, nor is there any evaluation of learning at the end.
67. Teachers are usually quick to respond to students' individual learning needs, and students with special difficulties achieve well. High attaining students rarely have special tasks, but respond in depth to challenging homework. Assessment is thorough, marking detailed and helpful. In many lessons, the use of humour promotes good relationships and fosters motivation. Most students work productively and achieve well because they have pride in their work and want to succeed. The excellent learning ethos is a striking feature of students in the school.

68. Very good leadership and management of the department have a significant impact on work in English. The head of department is an energetic and forceful practitioner and provides a good role model for both staff and students. Staff recognise they are both challenged and supported. There is effective delegation of responsibilities, particularly in terms of implementing changes in Years 7 to 9. There is careful analysis of performance data and sound evaluation. Existing measures to monitor teaching by observation now need strengthening so that there is more consistency across the department.
69. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Results have risen, teaching styles are more varied, and the department has taken a lead in providing a stimulus for developments in the promotion of literacy and learning across the curriculum.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

70. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are well above average. Following staff development on the National Strategy, most but not all departments have introduced a variety of measures to structure lessons and adopt teaching styles that promote and reinforce language development. Most teachers' planning takes the development of literacy into account, specialist vocabulary is taught and spelling and grammar are usually checked. The school has moved forward on this since the last inspection. Developments and implementation now need monitoring and evaluating more effectively.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **FRENCH AND GERMAN**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in GCSE French and German are excellent, and students in all years achieve very well.
- The excellent subject knowledge of teachers sets high standards for students' learning.
- Collaborative learning requires more careful planning to ensure that all students develop their individual strengths.
- Students' writing skills are excellent owing to the teachers' insistence on high standards of accuracy.
- Students' excellent response in lessons is supported by their own motivation to succeed.
- Teaching is insufficiently monitored and developed, and excellent practice is not shared.

#### **Commentary**

71. In 2002 in both French and German, standards in Year 9 teacher assessments were well above national expectations, and at GCSE in 2002, results were excellent. The percentage of students gaining A\*/A grades was well above the national average for girls, similar schools, and other school subjects. In the current Years 9 and 11, students' achievement is very good; by the end of Year 9 they have reached well above national expectations and by the end of Years 10 and 11, standards are excellent in both French and German. The department is inclusive; all students, including those with special educational needs and the highest attaining students, achieve very well owing to the very good teaching they receive and their own excellent motivation.

72. Writing, which was a weakness in the last report, is now excellent in all years owing to the teachers' clear emphasis on accuracy of grammar and students' self correction of work; however, assessment is insufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels and students do not have clear guidelines for their progress in each skill. By Years 10 and 11 in speaking and writing, students can confidently cope with word order and noun forms in German, and with agreements and use of tenses in French.
73. Teaching and learning are very good overall; three quarters of the lessons seen were either very good or excellent, with three excellent lessons seen in German and one in French. The teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use this effectively in lessons as a model of fluency for students to copy. Consequently, all students have learned to speak confidently and unselfconsciously in structured situations, with good French and German accents; they can also readily understand and respond to teachers' questions. Students gain confidence in reading in both languages because teachers select texts of a high language level for them to study. Opportunities within collaborative learning are generally restricted; these do not always extend individual students into the highest language level of which each is capable.
74. Leadership is very good and management is good. The head of modern languages and head of German lead strongly with clear objectives, maintaining the highest standards in modern languages. There is a strong team commitment to the students' success. Despite this, there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and sharing of excellent practice across the department. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in most aspects of the provision.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is a strength of the department and there are examples of excellent teaching.
- Teaching styles have developed well and the department is very effective in enriching routine work through a variety of contexts such as games, challenges and problem solving activities.
- Standards are continuing to improve.
- As at the last inspection, there is insufficient use of ICT.
- Some teachers do not question students effectively enough to ensure that all are following the flow of the lessons, or that work attempted is checked before moving on to new ideas.

### **Commentary**

75. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were very high compared to all schools, and were around the average for similar schools. There has been steady improvement over the last few years with further improvement in 2003. GCSE results compare well with others in the school overall, and in addition many students took GCSE Statistics in Year 10, all gaining very high grades. Work seen in lessons and in exercise books is of a high standard in all year groups.
76. Achievement is good throughout. Students enter the school with attainment well above the national average, almost all students having level 5 of the National Curriculum. The rate of progress is well above the national expectation, most students gaining levels 7 or 8 in Year 9, and grades A\* to B in Year 11. An increasing proportion of students take a one-year course in GCSE Statistics in Year 10 with great success. Students achieve well in lessons. Achievement is good because work throughout the school is challenging and wide-ranging,

and, in Years 7 to 9, is taken from a year higher than the recommendation of the National Framework. A high proportion of students take the higher tier at GCSE, showing the high expectations of both teachers and students. Students identified as having special educational needs, or as gifted and talented, are well catered for and achieve well.

77. In most lessons seen teaching and learning were good or very good, with two lessons judged excellent. Teachers are caring and concerned to do their best for the students, and are knowledgeable about the subject and how it can be taught. Teachers are keen to offer extra help as needed, through revision and drop-in classes. Students are co-operative and take a pride in their work. The department is incorporating ideas from the National Numeracy Strategy, such as the three-part lesson, but learning objectives are not generally discussed with the students at the beginning of the lesson or revisited in the plenary session. Teachers frequently encourage students to do challenging mental calculations. There is good use of equipment such as mini-whiteboards to encourage whole class responses, but little use of ICT.
78. The department is developing a range of teaching styles and there are impressive problem solving activities, including year group challenges, and games to enrich learning and motivate students. There are several opportunities for students to form hypotheses, for example in looking for prime numbers, but these were not always followed through with sharing, discussion and writing down conclusions. Questioning is not always sufficient to ensure that students have understood teaching points before moving on. Approaches to assessment do not give sufficient information about progress through the curriculum or the use of day-to-day assessment in curriculum planning.
79. Leadership and management in the department are very good. The head of department provides a good role model for teaching. A cohesive team has been created, and there are good arrangements for the induction of new teachers and for professional development in the department. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively through lesson observation and scrutiny of work. The department has a clear vision, expressed in development planning, course provision, and a range of problem solving events. Although the scheme of work provides very helpful guidance about teaching activities, departmental documentation is brief and gives insufficient guidance about cross-school issues.
80. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards have improved, GCSE statistics has been further developed and there has been considerable development in the range of teaching styles, but progress in incorporating ICT into schemes of work is inadequate.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

81. Standards of numeracy are very high. Students have a very good command of number facts, and are able to tackle difficult mental calculations in unfamiliar situations. They have opportunities to apply mathematics in various subjects. Examples include collecting and analysing data in geography fieldwork, measurement, scaling and statistical display in design and technology, the interpretation of data in history, working out note values in music, shape work in physical education, algebraic work in spreadsheets in ICT, and calculation and graphical work in science. Students have no difficulties with this work, although most does not demand a high level of mathematical competence. Some departments have considered how their subject can contribute to students' numeracy skills, but overall there is little evidence that other subjects are making a systematic approach to incorporating aspects of numeracy into their work.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership and unity of approach provide students with a consistent and developing understanding of science.
- The quality of teaching is good but work is needed to identify and introduce a wider range of teaching strategies to challenge the most able students.
- Students enjoy their science lessons and play a full and active part in their learning.
- A committed team of teachers with the capacity to raise standards further.

### Commentary

82. Throughout Years 7 to 9 students make good progress and their results in the National Curriculum tests are well above the national average. In comparison with students in schools in a similar context, results are above average. There has been a consistent improvement in the test results since 2000, particularly at the higher levels. This improvement is due to the increasing impact of the National science strategy and the introduction of booster classes in Year 9. Attainment in the GCSE double science award is high and virtually all students obtained A\*-C grades in 2003; 77 per cent of those students secured A\*/A grades. These results are well above national figures and compare favourably with those of students in similar schools.
83. Students in Year 7 to 9 make good progress and achieve well. Lesson objectives are shared with students and a range of activities, encouraging active involvement of the whole class, is employed to check prior learning and understanding. The three-part lesson plan is employed effectively, with relevant starter activities providing a good stimulus for the main learning activities. Lively plenary sessions test students' understanding. Teaching throughout Years 7 to 11 is good. Discussion with skilful teacher questioning is a key feature of many lessons. Consequently, students learn their science well and gain in their ability to evaluate scientific observations. They express themselves clearly using appropriate vocabulary. Marking of students' written work is thorough and helpful.
84. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good and progress more rapid. Students in Year 10 have a thorough grasp of the fractional distillation of crude oil, can explain the composition of alkanes and model the atomic structure of these molecules. Investigational skills and the understanding of principles underpinning good scientific investigation are well developed. Year 11 students confidently planned and made predictions whilst undertaking an investigation on osmosis using potato strips and sugar solutions, identifying and taking account of all variables.
85. Teachers are well qualified, enthusiastic and have a secure subject knowledge. They ask demanding questions that produce good explanations. Year 11 students showed a good grasp of centripetal force when studying circular motion and the planets. Students' attitude and behaviour are very good. They work hard and complete practical work carefully and safely. Written work in all years is well presented and accurate. Good numeracy skills are shown in calculations. Setting arrangements in Years 9, 10 and 11 partly cater for the most able students, but there is a need to focus on providing more challenging extension work and variety for these students.
86. Resources are good and the school has imminent plans to further improve ICT provision very soon. Accommodation is adequate and health and safety are dealt with effectively. The programme for science laboratory refurbishment needs to be maintained. The department is well supported by a capable and committed team of technicians.

87. The department is effectively led by the recently appointed head of department, who has a clear vision for the future development of the subject. Good use is made of assessment information to monitor students' progress and effectively used to set targets. Strategies for monitoring the quality of the teaching within the department are underdeveloped and this needs to be addressed. Overall, improvements since the last inspection have been good.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in ICT is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The standards achieved at the end of Years 9 and 11 are well above national expectations.
- Students have an excellent attitude towards ICT and work independently in lessons with an impressive degree of confidence.
- Leadership of the ICT department is very good and a number of important innovations have recently taken place.
- Students' progress in ICT is constrained by the blocked timetable system and the below average time allocation.
- ICT skills are insufficiently developed in other subjects and greater efforts are required to monitor this provision.

### **Commentary**

88. Results at GCSE are well above the national average and have significantly improved since the last inspection. Standards in Year 9 have also improved over the last three years and are now well above national expectations. However, some of the more able students do not reach their full potential. This is largely due to the low time allocation for ICT in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11. Students show a very good knowledge of technical vocabulary, have well developed desk-top publishing skills and are particularly good at using databases and spreadsheets. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, the majority of students were confident and skilful in the way they designed a spreadsheet and entered complicated formulae, including the IF function, to model the outcome of a charity disco. Similarly in Year 7, students showed a very high level of competence in the way they designed PowerPoint slides with many including digital photographs, scanned images and animations. However, students' knowledge and understanding of the use of ICT in control, sense and measurement are insufficiently developed and these aspects need to be more closely monitored.
89. Teachers have good subject knowledge and offer students very clear explanations of technical terms and procedures. They offer students a very good balance of guidance and challenge when responding to requests for help during individual work on the computers. Students work with impressive self-motivation and can concentrate for long periods. Very effective learning occurred in all of the lessons observed. Some particularly good lessons were observed in Years 7 and 8 where students were offered a good mixture of tasks and teaching approaches and as a result students' interest was maintained and progress was rapid.
90. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 was generally good but there was often an over-reliance on the use of task-sheets and direct instruction from the teacher. This makes the lessons too repetitive and predictable for the students. The situation is not helped by the shortage of time available to cover the GCSE course. With a more realistic time allocation teachers would be able to give students more time to discuss and evaluate each other's work, leading to greater achievement. Marking and assessment are good. Students receive regular and detailed feedback on their work. In Years 10 and 11 teachers provide very good advice to the students on how the standard of their coursework matches the GCSE grade descriptions. Students are regularly reminded of the assessment criteria against which their work is assessed.

91. The ICT department is very well led by the head of department, who has introduced a number of important innovations over recent years such as the school's successful bid for specialist Mathematics and Computing status and the implementation of an Intranet. The department is very well organised with detailed schemes of work and a comprehensive set of task sheets to support lessons. There is a good system in place for booking ICT equipment and the ICT suites when they are not being used for specialist ICT lessons. At present the facilities are insufficient to fully satisfy the demand from subject areas and greater expenditure is needed to bring the resources and accommodation up to national expectations.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

92. Students show a high level of competence in the way they use ICT to support their work in other subjects: for example in their desk-top publishing skills and their ability to research topics using the Internet. However, most departments have too little ICT equipment and this has an adverse effect on students' achievement.
93. Design and technology is exceptional in being well equipped with modern laser cutters and computer aided design and manufacture software. All other subjects are under-resourced for ICT. There is only one interactive whiteboard and while about half of the staff now have their own laptops there are very few data projectors in departments and only a handful available to be borrowed from the ICT department. In mathematics there are a large number of graphical calculators but they are not currently being used. The science area has some data-logging equipment but it is old and unreliable.
94. In art there are no resources for digital artwork and students have no access to editing software such as Photoshop. Some departments such as history and English compensate for the lack of ICT resources by being quick to book the a computer suite so that students' learning is enhanced by access to stimulating information, images and graphics from the Internet. As a specialist mathematics and computing college this situation is unsatisfactory and should urgently be improved.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **GEOGRAPHY**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are high, leading to very good achievement by students.
- Leadership is very good and with an ongoing commitment to high standards.
- There is insufficient monitoring of teaching activities to ensure that all teaching is of a high quality.
- Assessment procedures are good and students are informed about their progress.

#### **Commentary**

95. Results in examinations are high and GCSE results are excellent. By the end of Year 9 there is excellent, detailed writing from high attaining students. Those students with relatively lesser ability have very good factual writing but provide less detailed information related to causes and effects. All students have at least very good map and atlas skills; graph work supports very good numeracy and analytical skills. This is very good progress and results in very good achievement for students. By the end of Year 11 students have very good research skills and there is high quality extended writing. Maps and diagrams have detailed and informative labelling. Lower attaining students omit some details in written and descriptive work but overall

their work is good. They are also less careful with fieldwork for examinations and data collected is sometimes omitted or not analysed. Most examination fieldwork however, is very good or excellent. All students have good literacy and very good map and atlas skills. The progress made in Years 7-9 is sustained over Years 10-11 and there is very good achievement

96. Teaching is very good overall. Lessons are mostly well structured, with very good pace and high expectations of students. There is usually a variety of activities to ensure student motivation and concentration on tasks is high in lessons. At the end of an excellent Year 11 lesson, planned to complete fieldwork studies, students either prepared group posters for corridor display or made oral group presentations to the class. In a very good Year 7 lesson, students used individual postcards to identify aspects of geography and used them to write questions for each other. This variety of stimulus and activities provides motivation and encourages both group work and individual learning.
97. Occasionally teachers talk too much and provide too few opportunities for student participation. The lesson pace is then slower and progress is limited. Marking is satisfactory in Years 7-9 but is good in Years 10-11 with more critical comment. Students' attitudes to work are very good and they respect their teachers and behave well in lessons. The provision for fieldwork and visits is excellent for all students.
98. Leadership of the department is very good and there is very good development planning. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. Standards have continued to rise, and the monitoring and sharing of fieldwork is now good. Classroom activities including teachers' marking still need to be monitored.

## **HISTORY**

Provision in history is **very good**

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching enables students to learn very well.
- Excellent classroom relationships encourage students to realize their full potential.
- The subject benefits from very good leadership and very effective management, which contribute to results being consistently well above national norms.
- Assessment procedures and practice in the lower school do not always give sufficient information to students to help them improve.

### **Commentary**

99. Standards in both Year 9 and the GCSE examinations have been consistently very high for a number of years. Girls achieve very highly, displaying well-developed source handling and study skills. They understand, use and explain subject-specific terminology very accurately and make detailed notes, although many do not include the dates of historical events as a matter of routine. There is a clear strength in extended writing in technically accurate English, with only occasional minor errors of spelling and grammar. Examination answers often reveal skilfully constructed arguments in response to difficult historical issues. They have well-developed ICT skills and use computers confidently for research and communication.
100. Teachers have a very good command of their subject, plan and structure their lessons expertly and work hard to compensate for the shortcomings in the accommodation. They know their students very well and prepare them thoroughly for their examinations, ensuring that they receive plenty of practice through mock papers together with valuable guidance on study, revision and examination skills. Lessons are varied, challenging and develop historical skills, such as the analysis and interpretation of sources, very well. Girls learn quickly and effectively

because they are hard working and self-motivated. They respond positively, intelligently and energetically to their staff, each other and the demands placed on them. Students are well supported in their studies, although marking is not always as informative as it might be in identifying areas for improvement, and there is scope for more target setting and self evaluation in the lower school.

101. The subject is very well managed and led. It has a high profile in the school and the GCSE option attracts many students. The annual four-day visit to the First World War battlefields is so popular that this year the school is having to run it twice! Lessons are regularly monitored and good practice is shared between teachers, who work closely together. Since the last inspection the department has reviewed its teaching practice and increased the proportion of students obtaining A\* and A grades; improvement has been good.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students attain very high standards in religious education.
- The department is excellent in its inclusion of all students.
- Students exemplify outstanding learning behaviour.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and highly developed questioning skills, which help students to increase their knowledge and understanding.
- Not enough time is provided for Years 10 and 11 and this means that students do not reflect adequately on their work.

### **Commentary**

102. In 2003, most students were entered for the full GCSE course and almost all gained A\* or A grades, including three candidates who were in the top five candidates nationally. The remainder of the cohort took the GCSE short course and two thirds of students gained higher grades.
103. The teachers' excellent knowledge and high quality questioning mean that all students are included in the lessons. They challenge and support students to extend their thinking, knowledge and understanding. The students' positive approach to their work leads to active and co-operative learning with the teachers giving guidance. In Years 7 - 9, varied teaching and learning strategies are used: oral work is very strong; groups work collaboratively; student presentations and role-plays feature. In Years 10 and 11, learning is advanced by active discussion as a whole class and within groups. Students show sensitivity to each other and a willingness to advance their thinking in response to points made. However, often time pressures mean that there is inadequate time to reflect on what has been studied.
104. The department is managed very well. The two specialist teachers are a close team. They have a lot of informal day-to-day contact and this leads to ideas being shared and work being sampled. Formal systems of lesson observation are less developed. The head of department has supported the double lesson of non-specialist teaching very well. The good leadership by the head of department means that there has been a very good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching strategies are more varied; all students enter GCSE and the assessment and the tracking of students are good. The department plan is to further develop their assessment strategies.

105. Religious education makes a good contribution to all students' personal development. In all lessons, the teachers value students. They give opportunities for them to consider spirituality and to develop their thinking through oral work. The timetabled time provided for religious education in Year 10 and 11 is inadequate. This impacts on the range of teaching methods employed. Students lack time to reflect adequately on the spiritual dimension and on their learning.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The determined, persistent, reflective leadership and inclusive management of the department provide an excellent role model.
- Dynamic teaching methods lead to very good learning and achievement.
- Excellent analytical assessment challenges and involves students in their own assessment and achievement.
- Students are mature and independent decision makers and designers with understanding of human need.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and does not meet the needs of the technology curriculum.
- There is a lack of up-to-date equipment to develop the use of ICT.

#### **Commentary**

106. On entry to the school students' designing and making skills are above those expected, but there is no baseline assessment of their skills, knowledge and understanding to clarify their exact National Curriculum levels. By the end of Year 9 rapid and accelerated designing and making across Years 7, 8 and 9 plus excellent assessments has raised students' attainment. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 were well above national averages indicating very good achievement. Students select a technology option to study in Years 10 and 11. At the end of their course in Year 11 they have maintained their very good standards of work. They are reflective and sophisticated designers and their achievement is very good.
107. Teaching and learning across Years 7 to 11 are consistently very good, producing very good achievement. Teachers are experts in their field of technology, which has an outstanding impact on learning. The wide range of well-maintained tools is only overshadowed by a lack of up to date and networked ICT, which reduces the industrial application of computers, and CAD/CAM to further advance designing and making. Teachers' expectation of work ethic and behaviour are reflected in the probing class questioning and the celebration of students' impressive results. The department has a strong philosophy that challenges teaching methods and assessment. Students enjoy the opportunity to be analytical and critical about their designs and the work of other designers, helping them to develop their personal designing and making skills.
108. In Years 10 and 11 students use their well-honed skills and capability to become more sophisticated in their designing. Portfolios illustrate in depth primary and secondary research into human needs and wants that provides an excellent basis for realistic yet exciting designs. A minority of students in Years 10 and 11 have had difficulty in meeting portfolio and design deadlines; effective mentoring of these students is improving their time management and achievement.

109. Leadership of the department is excellent. The teaching team, including the work of the very experienced and committed technician, are totally in tune with the principles of the department because of the inclusive management that listens and shares ideas. Management uses the skills of the team very well to review and develop the systems. Detailed monitoring and evaluation of teaching help to raise standards. Course work moderation and the feedback from external examiners indicates the team's consistency in their use of effective, demanding assessment that makes excellent use of previous learning to push for higher standards.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **ART AND DESIGN**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership of the department is very good and management very effective.
- The quality of teaching is very good and often excellent and students learn very well.
- Attitudes to work are very positive and behaviour is exemplary.
- Students are encouraged to develop as independent learners.
- The use of ICT is insufficiently developed to enable digital art to be fully explored.
- Resources do not fully support the curriculum.

#### **Commentary**

110. Standards in the department are very high and examination results most encouraging. GCSE examination results show that every student has secured a grade in the A\*-C range for the past three years.
111. The very high quality of teaching from the committed and very knowledgeable staff has enabled the department to maintain its high standards. Students respond with very positive attitudes to their work and exemplary standards of behaviour that support a very positive, pleasant and industrious atmosphere for learning. Very good, respectful relationships are maintained in classes and students are encouraged to work independently. This promotes maturity, industry and a love of learning, all reflected well in the enthusiasm that is such an evident feature of teaching and learning. There is a very strong emphasis on observational drawing throughout the school and students make rapid progress with their drawing skills, laying a firm foundation from which all other art skills develop. They learn to observe closely and so enhance their appreciation of the world around them.
112. Computers are used very effectively for research into the lives and work of artists from different cultures and historical periods. Students are competent in using computers, but a lack of ICT resources limits their ability to explore the increasingly important area of digital art, including image manipulation.
113. Although the curriculum is a broad and relevant one, enriched by visits to galleries in London and Amsterdam, there are gaps in the resources for textile art and screen-printing, which leave teaching skills under-utilised.
114. The head of department leads a very strong team of teachers who effectively challenge all students to work to the best of their ability. She provides an excellent role model for both teachers and students, through her enthusiastic teaching, excellent command of her subject and consistently high expectations of good behaviour and hard work. Under her leadership the department has made a very good improvement since the previous inspection.

## MUSIC

Provision in music is **good**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between teachers and students are outstanding.
- The extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- Teaching is enthusiastic and challenging.
- There are weaknesses in some aspects of assessment.
- There are limitations in both accommodation and resources.

### Commentary

115. Students enter the school with standards that are above average. Teacher assessments indicate that standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were high. Evidence from the inspection indicates that students in Year 9 are currently achieving standards that are well above national expectation. GCSE results in 2003 were well above national averages. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 seen during the inspection were high.
116. The achievement of students in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good and this results from good teaching that is imaginative and enthusiastic. By the end of Year 9, students are confident in using notation. They improvise vocally and use keyboards with a sense of style. Learning activities are accessible to all, and teachers provide good support, often using their own musical skills and the skills of individual students to demonstrate to the class. Students enjoy researching musical topics and this gives them very good knowledge and understanding. Students use keyboards with the correct techniques. The most able produce compositions of high quality. Occasionally, where students are not challenged enough, achievement is not as high.
117. The achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is very good. They are competent and creative musicians. They have well-developed performing skills. Their excellent relationships with each other and with the teacher enable a high level of collaborative work. Teaching is very good. Compositions display imagination, which is supported by a secure understanding of musical techniques.
118. The leadership of the department is very good. The teachers have a clear shared vision and provide excellent role models for students. The management of the department is good. The large number of visiting instrumental teachers are supported and monitored very well. There are weaknesses in the ongoing tracking of student progress and the judging of standards.
119. The restrictions created by the accommodation are managed effectively. The second teaching room is not appropriately set out nor equipped to support musical learning. There are also no readily available facilities for students to work undisturbed in groups. A lack of resources means that opportunities for students to use ICT to support music making are severely limited particularly in Years 7 – 9.
120. The school offers a wide range of instrumental tuition, and visiting teachers provide over 350 lessons per week. There is a very full programme of extra curricular activities, run by the departmental staff and instrumental teachers, and supported by students, and other staff. The quality of rehearsing of the vocal groups seen during the inspection was outstanding. The standards achieved by these groups are very high indeed.
121. The standards seen at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and the department now generates much enthusiasm for music amongst students.

## **DRAMA**

Drama was lightly sampled during the inspection. GCSE results in 2002 were very high in relation to national norms; in 2003 these high standards were maintained. One lesson was observed in Year 8, one in Year 10 and one in Year 11. Planning is good and teaching and learning are good overall, with many very good features. Drama makes a significant contribution to students' personal development and to the social and cultural life of the school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching, learning and achievement are particularly good in Years 10 and 11. The work ethic and levels of performance that are evident in both GCSE PE and the core programme are exemplary. However, the most able students are not given demanding enough activities in a small number of lessons.
- The response of students to teaching is excellent. They work with enthusiasm and enjoyment and make very good use of the opportunities that their highly professional teachers provide.
- Teachers and students enjoy very good relationships that result in a very good environment for learning.
- A detailed and accurate review of the department's performance provides a valuable springboard for future development.
- Indoor teaching accommodation is limited and this constrains the range of activities that can be offered.
- Schemes of work lack detail and do not provide an adequate structure for some courses.

### **Commentary**

122. By the end of Year 9 the vast majority of students are achieving levels of performance that are in line with or above national expectations. In the 2003 GCSE examination nine out of ten students gained a grade of B or better. In lessons and other activities seen during the inspection standards overall were above national expectations. The majority of students perform well in a range of activities.
123. A small proportion of students achieve less well in physical education than in other subjects owing to the weighting given to practical activity. They find it difficult to demonstrate high levels of performance in four different activities. However, the quality of the written work indicates high standards. Students' understanding of theoretical aspects of the subject is very impressive. Some of the GCSE course work on individual sports is excellent, and good use is made of word processing, data analysis and the Internet.
124. The quality of teaching is good and enables students to make good progress in relation to their capabilities. Since the last inspection good progress has been made in giving students a wide range of opportunities to plan and evaluate their own performance. Lessons are well structured and the relationships between staff and students are excellent. Students have a very mature attitude to their learning, and make maximum use of the opportunities provided to polish and refine their work. They enjoy planning their responses to physical challenges and participate in lessons with great enthusiasm.
125. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The recently appointed head of department has a strong vision for the development of the subject in the school. All staff have

contributed to a detailed and accurate review of the department, which forms a strong springboard for future progress.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **CITIZENSHIP**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a very good range of citizenship activities, including extra-curricular activities, which involves all students in active learning.
- Citizenship is taught successfully in part through PSHE.
- Citizenship is not yet included in the schemes of work for most subjects and the contribution of most subjects to the students' learning in this area is unsatisfactory.

#### **Commentary**

126. Assessment and monitoring of the subject in lessons are not yet in place, so subject standards are not available. Students' involvement in activities has been self assessed with tutor support and these show good student involvement in a wide range of activities. These include elections, support and fund raising for charities, industry days and a community fair.
127. Citizenship lessons are included in some PSHE lessons for each year group. None of these was taking place during the week of the inspection but the lesson plans seen were good and included clear objectives for each lesson. Subject-related citizenship lessons were seen during the week but none made the subject and its learning objectives clear. Delivery of citizenship teaching through other subjects is unsatisfactory and does not meet National Curriculum requirements. In one tutor group good, active citizenship was seen as students received reports back from form representatives on green issues and the school council. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good when it is well presented.
128. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and committed to raising standards. The provision for active citizenship is very good. The preparation for the integration of the subject into the school curriculum has been completed. Training in the teaching of the subject is now required to ensure that the subject fully meets requirements. Assessment procedures need to be implemented, and monitoring of the subject is required.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 13 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 2002.

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses 2002*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	National	School	National	School	National
Biology	11	100	82	36	33	40.9	33.2
Chemistry	11	82	85	46	37	36.4	35.2
Classical Studies	5	100	95	40	50	44.0	42.3
Drama	9	100	95	44	38	45.6	39.1
English Lit.	9	100	94	67	38	47.8	38.9
German	5	100	88	40	35	44.0	35.6
History	6	83	92	17	37	31.7	37.8
ICT	6	100	78	50	21	41.7	28.5
Mathematics	11	82	74	36	34	33.6	31.3
Physics	5	80	82	60	36	42.0	34.3
RE	6	83	91	0	39	26.7	37.9

### *Level 3 GCE A level courses 2002*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	National	School	National	School	National
Art and Design	15	100	96	67	49	100	85.1
Biology	45	96	92	40	36	78.7	74.1
Business Studies	11	100	96	36	33	80.0	76.5
Chemistry	18	100	94	67	46	96.7	81.1
Classical Studies	16	100	99	38	52	87.5	88.0
Communication Studies	27	100	98	63	37	94.1	81.1
Drama	9	100	98	56	42	91.1	82.9
English Literature	36	100	99	78	44	104.4	84.3
French	26	100	96	42	46	80.8	83.0
Design and Technology	14	100	95	71	36	97.1	76.5
General Studies	24	96	90	83	29	103.3	69.3
Geography	15	100	97	67	41	93.3	80.9

German	15	100	96	73	44	97.3	82.1
History	21	100	97	67	41	98.1	81.2
ICT	12	100	89	58	22	88.3	64.1
Mathematics	27	96	93	59	52	90.4	84.7
Music	7	100	97	86	42	102.9	82.2
Psychology	9	100	94	78	39	104.4	77.7
Physics	9	100	93	67	43	91.1	78.6
Religious Studies	11	100	96	73	44	94.5	82.2
Physical Education	18	95	95	22	30	73.3	73.2

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

The main focus in this inspection was on English literature at AS and A2 level. The department offers further choices in the form of Advanced level English language, and Advanced level communication studies, both of which were lightly sampled. Advanced level English language is a new course in its first term. One Year 12 lesson was observed. Recruitment is healthy, teaching is good and students are responsive and interested. A level communication studies results have been well above average for a number of years. This was the highest performing subject in 2003. One Year 12 lesson was observed. There is a strong team of teachers; students are developing good independence skills

### English literature

Provision in English literature is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-motivated students maintain well above average standards and attain very good results at AS and A2 level.
- Students from a wide ability range achieve very well.
- Students benefit from the challenging approach of expert teachers with very high expectations.
- Tighter lesson planning is needed in some lessons.
- Opportunities for extra-curricular are not as fully exploited as they might be, particularly for those students with higher ability.

### Commentary

129. A level results have been consistently very high in relation to national averages since 1998, a standard that seems to have been maintained in 2003. AS level results in 2002 were well above average; results for 2003 are similarly high. Standards seen in Year 13 are very high. Students are capable of sophisticated analytical insights, showing in their essays excellent control of language and a fluent mature style. Students in Year 12 show a developing ability to expand their ideas in detail, to argue cogently and to produce close textual analysis. These high standards reflect very good achievement, particularly in view of the fact that students in Year 12 have a wider attainment base than in the main school.

130. Students achieve well because of the very good and occasionally excellent teaching they receive. Expert specialist teaching challenges and fosters independence of thought: students value the fact that they have learned to articulate their own ideas and to think on their feet. They are helped to do this by sensitive understanding of their difficulties and questioning that continually probes for further precision of thought. Students recognise the value of group work in helping to shape ideas and develop confidence in their own views. There is occasional loss of pace in some lessons: tighter lesson planning with shared objectives and effective summarising would result in even further improvements to the high quality of teaching.
131. The strong leadership and management already reported have helped to maintain high standards in the face of many national changes, a considerable achievement. Since the last inspection students now have a greater choice of A level courses, although there is a relatively restricted range of extra-curricular opportunities. This is a very successful department, but more could be done to widen students' perspectives on the study of English and enrich their learning outside the classroom.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

The focus was on French, and German was sampled. In German, AS and A Level examination results in 2002 were well above average. One Year 13 German lesson was visited and additionally, student files were sampled. Current standards in German are well above average and achievement is good. French and German courses are very well subscribed.

Provision in French is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge sets high standards for students
- Students' achievement in reading is very good and in writing is excellent
- Undeveloped collaborative tasks sometimes restrict students' individual progress
- Students' excellent attitudes to learning contribute to effective working relationships with teachers
- There is insufficient monitoring of teaching, and sharing of good practice
- There are insufficient imaginative resources to enhance learning

### **Commentary**

132. In 2002, students of a wider ability range were entered for the A Level examination, and results were average, with all 25 candidates passing but with fewer A/B grades than in the past three years. These results are generally in line with expectations and achievement is satisfactory. Evidence from the inspection is that most students in Year 13 are working at or above their predicted grades and overall achievement is good. AS Level results in 2002 were above average; all 21 students passed, with an above average percentage of A/B grades. Indications are that current Year 12 students are working well towards their predicted grades. Retention rates over the past three years have been good.
133. In Years 12 and 13 standards are above average, and students' achievement is good, mainly as a result of teachers' high expectations. Teaching and learning are good overall; four lessons were seen, of which three were good and one was satisfactory. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, consistently delivering lessons in French; this results in students' above average listening and speaking skills. A few weaker students in both Year 12 and Year 13 lack confidence in speaking, mainly because teachers provide few opportunities for them to fully develop language confidence in collaborative tasks. In writing, standards are well above average in Years 12 and 13 because teachers support accuracy and grammar well; however,

teachers do not generally use imaginative resources to enhance students' learning. By Year 13, the higher attaining students can incorporate authentic language into written assignments; weaker students write on a lower language level with reasonable accuracy.

134. Teachers mark assignments thoroughly but do not routinely grade work according to examination criteria; consequently, students are not fully aware of their progress towards their predicted grades. Reading is above average, due to teachers' choice of challenging texts for study. Year 13 students frequently read independently, researching French Internet sites for coursework information. All students are highly motivated and have excellent working relationships with their teachers.
135. Leadership is very good and management is good. The departmental head promotes very high standards, teachers have a strong shared commitment to students' achievement, and departmental documentation is comprehensive. However, teaching is not routinely monitored. Improvement since the last report is satisfactory.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**

- The department offers a wide range of AS and Advanced level courses which are taught by knowledgeable and committed teachers.
- AS level performance has been very good, and Advanced level success has been good although not among the best subjects in the school.
- There is insufficient use of ICT.
- The induction arrangements and the extra support offered by teachers, much appreciated by the students, are helping to raise standards.

### **Commentary**

136. Standards in the sixth form are good. AS results have been consistently well above the national average for the last few years and most students achieve high grades. There have been several unclassified grades, but the department has been working hard to reduce that number through effective approaches to supporting students on entry and the benefits were already apparent in 2003. A Level results have fluctuated over the last few years and have varied between around the national average to well above, but performance at A level is below that in many other subjects. Achievement in the sixth form is good. All students taking AS and A level courses have a good GCSE grade on the Higher Tier. They build on this effectively, making good progress. Work seen in both Year 12 and Year 13 was of a high standard and indicated good progress in the various courses.
137. Teaching is good overall. It is always at least satisfactory and is often very good. Teachers are knowledgeable, with expertise in the various branches of mathematics offered. Although some lessons involve a rather routine coverage of the topic, in the best lessons the teaching goes well beyond this to look in depth at different possibilities and so enrich the students' understanding. Students respond to the teaching very well. They appreciate the wide range of options and the efforts and commitment of their teachers. The department has recognised the difficulties some students have on entering advanced courses in mathematics and offers an induction programme and drop-in classes. The students value this extra provision.
138. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The number and variety of courses at AS and A level have been developed. Take-up has increased with a good proportion of students continuing to Advanced level and results are as good or better than national averages.

## **SCIENCE**

The main focus in the inspection was on chemistry and physics. During the inspection week Year 13 biology students were attending an Advanced level biology field course in Somerset. A brief visit was made to the location. The course involved a systematic study of a range of habitats and the production of individual projects related to a specific ecosystem. The work was challenging, well planned and delivered. Results in biology at both AS and GCE A level are very good.

## **Chemistry**

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above the national average at both GCE AS and Advanced level.
- Students have very high levels of motivation and excellent attitudes.
- Teachers need to establish strategies, which ensure that students have comprehensive notes from which to revise.
- More regular use needs to be made of assessment data to monitor students' progress
- Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of chemistry

### **Commentary**

139. Chemistry GCE Advanced level results in 2002 were very good. All students gained a pass grade and the proportion of students gaining A or B grades was above the national average. In 2003, ninety-four per cent of the entry, achieved grades A to E and half the students gained higher grades. However, the students' average points score did fall slightly compared with the previous year. Results for Year 12 in the AS examination were above the national average in 2002 and showed further improvement this year.
140. During the inspection a significant number of chemistry students were attending the biology field trip. From work seen in the current Year 13 files and their coursework it is evident that students work at appropriate standards. Discussions with students indicate that they can confidently use convention for the naming of organic compounds, and understand how hydrogen bonding affects the boiling point of alcohols with different molecular structures. Coursework assignments indicate that their experimental techniques are good and they have an understanding of the chemical processes involved. Numerical skills well support the application of chemistry to complex problems. The content, pace and challenge of the work are appropriate for students with above average previous attainment. Students in Year 12 also have a positive attitude towards the subject and are encouraged by the supportive climate and relationships with their teachers.
141. Teachers know their subject well and teach with enthusiasm, though the pace can sometimes be somewhat slow. Questioning is good and makes the students think. Discussions with Year 13 students revealed concerns regarding their perceptions of the course. They considered the transition from GCSE to A level chemistry studies had been a difficult adjustment. They found the course structure and content throughout Year 12 hard to follow and demanding. In order to succeed they were obliged to invest an immense amount of time and effort on their studies. The department needs to address this issue and establish strategies within lessons to more actively support students. It also needs to ensure that students develop good note taking habits by recording key information. There is a good scheme of work. Opportunities for more frequent assessments need to be built into this teaching programme.

142. Leadership and management are good and teachers work efficiently as a team. Resources are well managed. One laboratory has recently been upgraded and this refurbishment needs to be maintained. The department is aware of the difficulties encountered by some students. It must now implement measures to effectively support all students. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection.

### **Physics**

Provision in physics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well in Years 12 and 13 and obtain results well above the national average.
- The very good relationships between staff and students play an important part in maintaining high standards
- Good leadership and management of the department have created a team that works harmoniously and provides students with well-planned and rigorous courses in Years 12 and 13.
- Teaching is generally good but some students in Year 12 require guidance in dealing with the mathematical elements of the course.
- Students under-perform in the synoptic module of the A2 examination.

### **Commentary**

143. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average in Years 12 and 13. Results in the AS and A-level examinations confirm this view and have been maintained at a consistently high level over the last 3 years. In 2003, almost half of the students taking the AS examination were awarded an A grade but four students performed below their potential and achieved much lower grades.
144. The physics teachers have excellent subject knowledge and considerable experience. Teaching is generally good. In the best lessons seen a high level of students' interest was maintained by including a good mix of direct instruction, teacher demonstrations and well focussed practical work. Teachers' explanations were always very clear and humour was often used to lubricate the learning process. The relationship between the teachers and their students was noticeably good and this plays an important part in students' high level of achievement. A less successful lesson was observed where there was an over-reliance on simply putting numbers into formulae with little effort made to help students' understand where the formulae came from. Although there is some inconsistency in the marking of students' day-to-day work, unit tests and reports of practical work are conscientiously assessed with plenty of guidance given to students on how to improve their future work.
145. The management of the physics department is good. Staff work closely as a team sharing their expertise and ideas and they clearly know their students well. Each year the department analyses the reasons for discrepancies between examination results and predictions and takes appropriate action. For example, in 2003 it was clear that many students under-performed in the synoptic unit of the Advanced level course. Special attention is now being paid to prepare the Year 13 students thoroughly for such examination papers.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good and students receive very good support and guidance.
- The standards achieved at AS and Advanced level are well above the national average
- Teaching is sound but theory sessions are too strongly teacher directed with insufficient variety of tasks and stimuli for the students.
- The range of assignments offered to Year 13 students is too restricted and prevents some students from following their particular area of interest in ICT.
- The number of students choosing to study ICT in the sixth form is lower than most other subjects.

### Commentary

146. Standards at Advanced level have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now well above the national average. Over the last three years, more than half of the students taking the AS examination secured an A or B grade. Improvement at Advanced level has taken longer to establish, with no students gaining an A grade until 2002. For the last two years over twenty-five per cent of students have obtained an A grade with over fifty per cent securing at least a grade B. This improvement in standards is largely due to the increased level of support and guidance for students in their coursework assignments. In order to satisfy the Examination Board's requirements for the award of high grades in coursework, students are instructed to choose spreadsheet or database projects based on a 'real problem' typically drawn from local companies. This gives students the satisfaction of solving a real-life problem, but for those students who are mainly interested in other aspects of ICT, such as web-design or programming, these arrangements are too restrictive.
147. Teaching in the sixth form is well informed and students' work is regularly and conscientious marked; errors are corrected and helpful suggestions for improvements are offered. Students learn well in relation to their previous attainment and make good progress in practical sessions when they can work at their own pace while being supported by effective individual support from the teacher. During theory sessions progress can be slow, however, owing to insufficient variety in the teaching methods used. Students can become bored and passive if there is an over-reliance on direct instruction from the teacher and little more than a detailed summary sheet used for stimulus. Resources for sixth form study are good in terms of the availability of computers but there is a shortage of modern, ICT teaching and learning aids. During the lessons observed laptops and data projectors were rarely seen being used and no use was made of the school's only interactive whiteboard. This traditional method of teaching and the lack of modern ICT resources may explain why the number of students opting for the AS course is disappointing low. Another contributory factor is the low time allocation for the GCSE short course.
148. The leadership and management of the sixth form ICT provision are very good. The head of department has a clear vision of the future and is committed to the continued improvement of students' examination results. Detailed schemes of work are in place and reliable systems are used to monitor the progress of the students and set individual targets. The department receives good technical support from the two technicians, whose work is directed and managed well by the head of department.

## HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography, history and psychology. Religious education was sampled, and standards were found to be well above average and teaching of very good quality.

### Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average leading to very good student achievement.
- There is good use of assessment and student monitoring and students are well informed about their progress.
- More monitoring of teaching and marking is required to maintain high standards of teaching.

### Commentary

149. Results in examinations at Advanced level are well above average and students' achievement by the end of Year 13 is very good. No specific GCSE grades are required for students entering the sixth form in Year 12 and they make very good progress resulting in good achievement. By the end of Year 13, high attaining students produce a variety of very good detailed case studies and excellent, concise notes based on Internet and textbook research. Lower attaining students also produce good work but written description is less well developed and evidence may sometimes be inaccurately reproduced. All students use the correct terminology and make good progress with numeracy. They complete detailed personal investigations and demonstrate strong commitment to independent study. The best are very good with excellent analysis of data and evaluation but others are more descriptive than analytical. All students have at least good literacy, numeracy, and communication skills.
150. Teaching is very good with high expectations of students. Crisp questioning, which ensures high quality responses, and excellent positive encouragement, are features of the best lessons. There is good individual support for students in all lessons. In a very good Year 12 lesson, which required the study of complex graphs, the teacher ensured that four new students received very good but unobtrusive support and monitoring. A weakness in a few lessons is that too much time is spent making notes instead of developing ideas. All students' studies are enriched by very good opportunities for fieldwork and the techniques learned can also be used to support their individual investigations. Students enjoy their studies, work effectively and have excellent attitudes to research and learning. Marking is good with analytical comment to guide the students. Relationships between students and their teachers are very good and demonstrate mutual respect.
151. The department is led by a knowledgeable geographer who is committed to sustained improvement. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards have continued to rise and good resources are available to students in the department and library. Teaching needs to be more formally monitored.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good and sometimes excellent teaching, combined with examiner expertise, prepares students very well for AS and Advanced level exams.
- Excellent classroom relationships encourage students to realize their full potential.
- The subject benefits from very good leadership and very effective management, which contribute to results being consistently well above national norms.
- Some students do not routinely include dates in their work.

### Commentary

152. In 2002 candidates in the A level exam achieved highly in comparison with national norms, as sixty-seven per cent gained grades A or B, compared to forty-three per cent nationally. In 2003 history students did similarly well.
153. In Year 12 students develop greater independence and confidence in their note-making as a result of the valuable guidance offered by their teachers. They analyse sources critically and structure their arguments with increasing sophistication. Many demonstrate an impressive understanding of historical concepts such as "social Darwinism". Lower-attaining students' notes are briefer and lack supporting detail, but girls of all ability levels display well- developed ICT skills, which are regularly deployed in studying history.
154. In Year 13 girls reinforce these elements with a developing understanding of the examination requirements and Advanced level essay writing. Their work reflects maturity and a confident command of their material.
155. Standards are high because teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and plan and structure their lessons very well. They collaborate closely and as a consequence are always ready to experiment with new approaches. Students benefit from the head of department's long experience as an examiner. They receive detailed guidance about study skills, revision and exam techniques and work very well together in researching and making group presentations on various topics. Teachers mark regularly and comprehensively and although minor errors of spelling or grammar are sometimes overlooked, students are well informed about where improvement is required. Mark schemes are shared with students who are closely involved in assessing their own progress.
156. A significant contribution to the high attainment is the mutual respect and high regard evident in the relations between staff and students, and amongst the students themselves. They have an independent and responsible approach to their studies and articulate their views in a lively and convincing manner.
157. The subject is very well managed and led. There is a continual focus on raising standards and teachers collaborate closely, resulting in some excellent lessons. Students' texts are of a good quality and despite the poor accommodation and absence of a departmental computer, progress since the last inspection has been good.

## Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall very good quality of teaching promotes very good learning.
- Students achieve very well and standards are well above average.
- Students are highly motivated and display much enthusiasm for the subject.
- Students are provided with very good support and relationships are very good.
- Very good assessment procedures keep students well informed of the progress they are making.
- Key learning points are not summarised in some lessons.
- Some classrooms are unsuitable for the teaching of the subject.

### Commentary

158. The subject was introduced in the sixth form in 2001. The 2002 AS level results were above the national average, both for the proportion of students obtaining a pass grade and for the proportion of students obtaining the higher A or B grades. These results were broadly in line with predictions based on students GCSE grades on starting the sixth form. The 2003 AS and Advanced level results were also above the 2002 national averages. These results represent very good achievement. The standard of work seen during the inspection in both Years 12 and 13 is well above expectations for this stage of the course. The very good progress students are making is linked to very effective subject leadership. The head of department has succeeded in developing a shared vision for the improvement of teaching, and monitors students' progress with great care. Improvement since the subject was introduced is very good.
159. Students in Year 12 are quickly gaining a basic understating of key concepts and ethical principles. In Year 13, students show a sound grasp of psychological principles and issues, for example those underlying normal and abnormal human behaviour. Students show a high level of enthusiasm for the subject. They are keen to express their views and show respect for the opinions of others. In both their written work and in discussion they display the ability to develop arguments and to set these alongside personal experiences, opinions and ideas and to evaluate different types of evidence.
160. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and students respond very well to teaching methods that promote independent and collaborative learning. Work is assessed constructively and students have a clear understanding of what they need to do in order to improve. Very good teamwork and relationships underpin a strong commitment to success and continued improvement in the subject.

## ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Sixth form students have the option of examinations in food technology or product design to Advanced level or Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level. Both options were inspected within the design and technology course. At the start of Year 12 students from the local boys school join design and technology. Numbers have shown a consistent rising trend and drop out rates are low.

## **Design and Technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management of the department maintain a good take up and retention of students.
- Prior learning that informs broad knowledge of designers and design principles.
- High calibre young designers who can think 'outside the box.'
- Accommodation that restricts the designing process and storage of completed designs.

### **Commentary**

161. Over recent years the percentage of A or B grades has been high compared with national averages, with over fifty per cent A or B grades for Year 12 and 13 in design and technology and a hundred per cent A or B grades from a small cohort for food technology in 2002.
162. Standards are well above average in AS and very high at Advanced level. All students make exceptional advances in skills, knowledge and understanding. The expertise of teachers with industrial backgrounds feed in manufacturing experience that makes the learning realistic and exciting in terms of designing for real human need. They experiment using the skills they have developed in science to test hypotheses and ideas, using their results to modify their practical work and the digital camera to evidence their recorded outcomes. Similarly, the product design option stretches and challenges lateral thinking and some students are able to make use of advanced ICT in the use of the laser cutter to improve the quality of their finished product.
163. Teaching is stimulating. Teachers inspire students to challenge convention. This is a developmental progression from the main school experience where independent thinking was encouraged. In Years 12 and 13 students take responsibility for their designing.
164. Challenging, rigorous and mature discussions are the basis for very good modification and refinement of design. However there are missed opportunities for group review of the design process to keep up momentum of responding to 'needs as well as wants' when using their research. ICT is used very well but the lack of immediate access to networked computers impedes the efficiency for those engaged in analysis or computer aided design.
165. Leadership and management continue to be excellent in the sixth form. Excellent standards of assessment - from individual student tutorials in class, where students' nebulous ideas are challenged for realism, to the exacting marking that prompts and drives students to higher achievement in design and technology all focus on individual student need. Technical expertise and support from the technician in product design contribute additional thought provoking problem solving skills. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Although teachers make the best of accommodation for product design it impedes development because of lack of space and organisation for designing.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

Art and design and music were inspected in detail. Advanced level theatre studies was also sampled. Results in theatre studies have been above national norms, with a dip in 2003. One Year 12 lesson was observed. Teaching is good but cramped accommodation and large numbers mean that progress is not as good as it should be.

## Art and Design

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and sometimes excellent and students learn very well.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Students are very positive about their work and their behaviour is exemplary, reflecting their levels of maturity well.
- Opportunities to explore digital art are limited by the lack of computers and appropriate software in the department.
- Standards of research and development of work are very high.
- Post 16 studio accommodation is restricted and storage space is inadequate.

### Commentary

166. Standards in the department are very high. The entry of students from other schools at Year 12 depresses the overall examination results, because their prior experience of art has not been rigorous and their art skills are less well developed. However, the 'open access' policy at this stage of learning is very beneficial to those students who have not benefited from earlier entry to the school. They apply themselves to the rigorous demands of the advanced courses and make rapid progress towards the examinations. Two students who completed their Advanced level studies this year, lost interest and their attendance rate declined, resulting in lower examination grades than had been predicted.
167. The head of department sets an excellent example to her teaching colleagues and to the students. She is purposeful and clear about the way forward and has built a very strong team to ensure that standards are able to improve as the department develops. The department has made a very good improvement since the previous inspection.
168. Teachers have an excellent command of their subject and teach with skill and enthusiasm, challenging students and driving standards up. They have high expectations of independent learning, which students appreciate and which leads to a rich variety of research and development of work. The coursework marking and assessment procedures are very good and students have a clear understanding of how well they are doing. Very high standards of behaviour are expected and students respond in an exemplary way. Relationships are excellent and students feel valued as their work is sensitively, but critically evaluated.
169. The separate accommodation for students is not adequate for the rising numbers taking advanced level courses and the storage space for work is poor. Students are skilled in using the Internet for research, but are very limited in opportunities to explore digital art, because of the lack of department computers and appropriate software. Life drawing experiences are limited and standards of portraiture and life drawing are a relative weakness against the very high standards of observational drawing overall.

## Music

The study of music at AS and A level is shared between this school and its sixth form partner school. South Wilts Grammar School teaches listening and understanding, performing and analysing music. Composing is taught at its partner school. No performance was seen during this inspection. The small amount of composition seen was insufficient to make a judgement on overall standards in this component.

Provision in music is **very good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards achieved are high and well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
- Students are not sufficiently involved in assessment of their own work.

## **Commentary**

170. Standards in listening and understanding, and stylistic analysis seen in lessons are well above average. Students are perceptive and knowledgeable listeners, bringing to bear not only their acute ears but also knowledge gleaned from research and from their experiences as performers and composers. In stylistic analysis they analyse in depth, accumulating and reinforcing their knowledge of how music was composed and developed through the ages. AS and A level results are very high, and have remained so for several years. Students achieve mainly grades A and B, and the majority achieve better than expected from their GCSE results. Students new to the school in the sixth form, who have had a more mixed experience of music, also achieve highly.
171. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Lessons are conducted at a very good pace. Teaching is challenging and students respond with great interest, and dedication, engaging in discussions about the music they hear. The teacher is an expert in the subject and consequently, during the lesson, students acquire a great deal of new knowledge, which they quickly assimilate, using new terminology with confidence. They write about music articulately. Occasionally, students teach the remainder of the class after researching set topics. This shows that they are well capable of working independently and could do more. Students review their work regularly with the teacher but should be more involved in the assessment of their own work, enabling them to set their own targets for improvement.
172. Learning is enhanced by students' excellent attitudes. They love the subject and think highly of it. New students to the school feel valued and included and very positive relationships between all make a very positive contribution to their learning. They are dedicated to its well-being in the school and take part in many of the extra curricular activities, which are of a very high standard. They assist with and also direct performances to raise money for the department.
173. The partnership between the girls' and boys' grammar schools in music is very successful. There is close contact between the schools and common strategies are in place. The teacher is a very good role model for the students and the department is well managed and very well led at this level. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection and overall improvement is good.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

### **Physical Education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers are deployed to deal with their own areas of specialism within the Advanced level and AS level programmes. This ensures very secure subject knowledge in lessons, which in turn promotes learning.
- The response of students to teaching is excellent.

- Teachers and students enjoy very good relationships that result in a very good environment for learning.
- The department is committed to helping all students achieve their full potential in examinations.
- Indoor teaching accommodation is limited and this constrains the range of activities that can be offered.
- There is a shortage of textbooks, and in some lessons there are inadequate references to academic research and wider reading.

### **Commentary**

174. Over the last three years the standards achieved at A level are broadly in line with national averages. Students enter Year 12 with a wide range of prior attainment in physical education, and several have a relatively weak understanding of the theoretical aspects of the subject. However, during the inspection the standards seen were good. Written work of most students is accurate, uses appropriate technical vocabulary, and contains evidence of good evaluative skills. There is particularly good understanding of the historical development of physical activity, the link between abilities and performance, and health related fitness.
175. Overall, students make good progress. They acquire new knowledge and deeper understanding of physical education at a steady rate. They have developed a very good understanding of the factors affecting skilled performance, and are making satisfactory progress with their research skills.
176. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and sometimes excellent. Teachers are generally deployed to work in their specialist areas and this makes an important contribution to successful lessons, as they are particularly confident in dealing with subject material. In the best lessons there is a very clear and intense focus on precise objectives that are expressed as learning outcomes for students. The pace of teaching in these lessons is almost relentless and demands very high standards of concentration and analysis by students. The students respond in an excellent fashion and are very appreciative of the skills of the teacher. Learning is less effective when objectives are less precise, and when the scope of the lesson is too broad. A shortage of textbooks and inadequate reference to wider research affects the learning in some lessons.
177. Students have a responsible attitude to their work and are enthusiastic about physical education. They make good use of ICT in their research and presentation of work. The department is well led and managed and staff are actively seeking ways to improve provision in the sixth form, based upon an honest and realistic self review of performance. Limited indoor physical education accommodation constrains the opportunities for practical activity on the school site.

### **BUSINESS AND VOCATIONAL COURSES**

There are no vocational courses taught at the school. Business studies was not a focus subject for the inspection but was sampled.

#### **Business Studies**

178. Standards generally in business studies were about average in examinations in the past two years. However, standards of work seen during inspection, in students' writing and lessons observed, are improving as the subject becomes established. Students join the course with no previous experience of the subject so there is good or very good achievement. The majority of students in business studies are also new to the school in Year 12. There is an exciting range

of teaching and learning methods to develop very good business acumen. Very good use is made of relevant, up-to-date, on-line resources to challenge understanding. Opportunities are readily taken to use the business community. However, the restricted space allocated to the department restricts business practice.

179. Teaching and learning are very good and promote very good achievement. Students are given practical exercises to develop their business knowledge and their self-confidence. Leadership and management of this one-teacher department is innovative and exciting. Students explained how enabling they find the methods used to develop business skills. Unfortunately, very restricted accommodation has a negative effect on the teaching styles and the ability of the students to work in a business style environment.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

### **General Studies**

General studies was not inspected in any detail. Results in the advanced level examinations are very high in comparison with all schools.

### **Key Skills**

180. The Key Skills course in ICT was sampled. It is primarily aimed at students who have little or no ICT experience at GCSE level. A detailed scheme of work has been written and each student is provided with an appropriate textbook. The teaching is pitched at a level-2 standard but some students may choose to be entered for the level-3 qualification. All the students spoken to in the lesson observed were grateful for this provision and were unanimous in wanting a formal qualification in ICT.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

