

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

THE KING'S SCHOOL, WORCESTER

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

on

October 17th – 21st 2005

MAIN REPORT

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

The King's School, Worcester

The two junior schools, King's St Alban's and King's Hawford, were inspected at the same time and separate reports published.

Full Name of the School	The King's School, Worcester		
DfES Number	885/6027		
Address	5 College Green, Worcester, WR1 2LL		
Telephone Number	01905 721700		
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E-mail Address	admin@ksw.org.uk		
Name of Headmaster	Mr Timothy H Keyes		
Chairman of Governors	Mr Donald T Howell		
Age Range	11 to 18	Gender	Mixed
Number of Pupils	882	Number of Boarders	Nil
Inspection Dates	17th-21st October 2005		

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 163(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills has accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. MAIN FINDINGS

Overall Summary

- 1.1 The King's School enables its pupils, both boys and girls equally, to become confident, independent and well-rounded young people. The well-qualified and hard working staff ensure a high standard of pastoral care, matched by good standards of academic achievement. Relationships within the school are excellent and pupils have many opportunities to take on responsibility. The school's exceptional site in the grounds of the cathedral contributes both to the pupils' sense of belonging and to their strong moral code, based on Christian values. Leadership by example from the highest level engenders an ethos of tolerance, trust and mutual respect.

What the School Does Well

- 1.2 The school has many strengths; outstanding among these are the following:
- Relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils are excellent, characterised by courtesy, loyalty and respect.
 - The high quality of pastoral care contributes very successfully to pupils' development and helps to give them a real sense of belonging.
 - Pupils have a strong moral code and are very able to take on responsibilities and to show leadership.
 - Pupils are very capable independent learners who are willing to take responsibility for their own learning.
 - The staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are enthusiastic, hard working and committed to helping pupils make the best of their talents.
 - A very good range of high quality extra-curricular activities is provided for pupils.

What the School Should Do Better

- 1.3 The school has no major weaknesses. The following area, however, could be improved:
- Monitoring by both senior and middle management is not always sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistent implementation of all policies and improvements in teaching and learning.

Standards of Attainment and Progress in Subjects

- 1.4 Pupils achieve good standards throughout the school. Pupils' attainment overall in both General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and Advanced level (A level) is satisfactory in relation to their abilities. Results in both GCSE and A level in the last three years have been well above the national average for all maintained schools. Pupils of all ages are articulate. Levels of literacy throughout the school are high and pupils are articulate. Mathematical understanding is also very good. Pupils of all ages are competent users of information and communication technology (ICT).
- 1.5 Pupils' progress is good, including the progress of those identified as requiring special educational provision. Nationally standardised measurements indicate that progress to GCSE in the last three years has been above national norms in most subjects. Progress from GCSE to A level is above national norms overall, but with considerable variation between subjects.

The Quality of Pupils' Learning, Attitudes and their Behaviour

- 1.6 The quality of pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour is very good. Pupils work effectively on their own and collaboratively. They listen attentively, ask shrewd questions and are keen to debate ideas. All year groups provided good examples of independent learning. Pupils are well motivated and have excellent relationships with one another and with their teachers. The standard of pupils' behaviour is very high both within and outside of the classroom.

The Quality of Teaching

- 1.7 The quality of teaching is good. The teaching meets the needs of all pupils, including those identified as requiring special educational provision. The teaching was very good in about two-fifths of the lessons seen, excellent in a significant number and very little was unsatisfactory. Teachers know their subjects well. Many communicate vividly in lessons and their enthusiasm encourages pupils to strive to improve. Most teaching challenges pupils to think hard and test out their own conclusions.

Other Aspects of the School

Attendance

- 1.8 Attendance levels at the school are good. Clear procedures are followed for registering pupils and establishing the reasons for any absence. The late arrival of a minority of pupils disrupts some lessons. The attendance and admissions registers are maintained in accordance with legal requirements.

Assessment and Recording

- 1.9 The quality of assessment and recording is good. The school has good systems for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress and these are appropriate for the age of pupils, their particular needs and their stage of development. These are mostly applied consistently and effectively. The school tracks pupils' progress efficiently and takes appropriate action when a need for learning support or extension work is indicated.

Curriculum

- 1.10 The school's curriculum is good. It is balanced and broad and it contributes well to the pupils' intellectual, physical and personal attainment and development. A very good programme of extra-curricular activities enriches the pupils' education.

Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

- 1.11 The quality of teaching and non-teaching staff is very good. Both teaching and non-teaching staff are well qualified, sufficient in number and effectively deployed. They contribute very well to the life of the school and its efficient running.

Resources for Learning

- 1.12 The quality of resources for learning is good. The provision of ICT for teaching and learning is good. The range, quality and accessibility of all other resources are good and they are used well to support pupils' learning and development.

Libraries

- 1.13 The quality of provision in the main school library is good. The library is very well organised and used regularly and productively. Many subjects also have separate departmental libraries, some of which are particularly well used.

Premises and Accommodation

- 1.14 The overall quality of accommodation is good, with some very good features. The premises and accommodation support curriculum provision, teaching and learning well and make a positive contribution to pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare.

Links with Parents and the Community

- 1.15 Links with parents and the community are very good. The school has made significant links with the local community and extensive links with the wider national and international communities. These considerably enrich the pupils' educational experience.
- 1.16 Almost all parents who responded to the ISI pre-inspection questionnaire were satisfied with the information provided by the school, the encouragement given to them to be involved in their children's education and the opportunity to approach the school with any concerns. The inspection team found no evidence to support the view of a small number of parents that reports and parents' evenings are not provided frequently enough.

Pupils' Personal Development

- 1.17 The school makes very good educational provision for pupils' spiritual and moral, social and cultural development. Great importance is placed on pupils developing their own personal code of conduct strong enough to enable them to enter adult life with a set of values that has been tested. The opportunities provided for social development are excellent.

Pastoral Care

- 1.18 The provision for pastoral care is very good. The very well managed pastoral, guidance and support systems and the whole-hearted commitment of staff, ensure that the school provides high quality care for the well-being, health and safety of its pupils. The school works hard to maintain a safe environment both for staff and for pupils

Governance and Management

- 1.19 Governance and management are good. Governance and leadership at the most senior level provide clear educational direction for the school and commitment to ensuring that the school's aims are met. Detailed and appropriate short- and long-term development planning support the school's aims, values and policies very well. However, routine monitoring by both senior and middle management is not always sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistent implementation of all policies and procedures. Day-to-day routines and administration work well.

Achievement and Quality in Activities

- 1.20 The range and quality of activities offered by the school are very good. Pupils support the activities very well and a very high proportion participates regularly. Many pupils of all ages achieve high standards in extra-curricular activities. Most staff make a significant commitment to the activities programme.

Progress Made by the School since its Last Inspection

- 1.21 The previous inspection was carried out in November 1999, under the auspices of the HMC (Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference) and it followed a different framework. Five overall recommendations were made. These concerned: the provision of challenge for the most able and a review of setting arrangements; devising opportunities for spiritual stimulus and exploration; moving the library to new accommodation; increasing cross-curricular collaboration and extending the computer network. The school has reviewed all these areas and taken appropriate action.

Compliance with the Regulations for Registration

DfES Standard		Does the school meet the regulatory requirements?
1. Quality of education:	1.(2) Curriculum	Yes
	1.(3)-(5) Teaching	Yes
2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils		Yes
3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils		Yes
4. Suitability of proprietors and staff		Yes
5. Premises and accommodation		Yes
6. Provision of information		Yes
7. Manner in which complaints are to be handled		Yes

Actions Required for Compliance with the Regulatory Requirements

- 1.22 No action is required.
- 1.23 In addition to the actions set out above, the school is asked to address any issues highlighted in *What the School Should Do Better*. These are set out as recommendations for the school in Section 2 of the report.

2. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The school has no major weaknesses but has some areas in which it could make improvements. The most significant of these is set out below for ease of reference. The numbers in brackets refer to relevant paragraphs in the main body of the report.

R1 Improve still further the standards achieved by pupils by:

- ensuring that all heads of department monitor the marking of pupils' work more closely (paragraphs 5,8; 7.5; 8.19 & 8.45);
- ensuring that all heads of department are actively engaged in maintaining high standards of teaching and sharing good practice within their departments (paragraphs 5.26; 7.5; 8.13 & 8.64).

3. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 3.1 The King's School, Worcester was founded during the reign of Henry VIII following the dissolution of the Benedictine monastery. The school continues to maintain close links with Worcester Cathedral whose choristers it has educated since 1943. Originally for boys, the school first admitted girls into the sixth form in 1971 and it became completely co-educational from 1991. The last boarding pupils left in 1999. The senior school acquired two co-educational junior schools, King's St Alban's and King's Hawford, in 1951 and 1996 respectively, and together they form the King's School Foundation. They share the same governing body, although each school runs as a distinct institution with delegated powers. The King's School and King's St Alban's occupy buildings on the same site that stretch back to the 12th century but which have been continuously adapted and extended. Sports facilities are both on site and at the playing fields a 15-minute walk away. King's Hawford is located 5 miles away, to the north of Worcester, with its own sports facilities and buildings.
- 3.2 At the time of the inspection, the King's School had 882 pupils (506 boys and 376 girls) aged 11 to 18 years on its roll; of these, 653 were in Years 7 to 11 and 229 in the sixth form. The school draws pupils not only from the city itself, but also from towns such as Malvern, Redditch, Kidderminster and Pershore, as well as outlying villages and farms. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school is an Anglican foundation but welcomes pupils from other faiths or none. Some two-thirds of the entrants at age 11 transfer from the two King's junior schools, and most of the remainder come from maintained primary schools.
- 3.3 The school has no pupils with statements of special educational need (SEN), but 70 pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties, mostly associated with dyslexia. Candidates for places at 11+ and 13+ sit entrance tests and are interviewed; 16+ candidates are offered places after tests and interview, conditional on GCSE results. The number of pupils leaving at the end of Year 11 to continue their education elsewhere varies, an average of 12 per cent, and new pupils join the school at this stage. Almost every sixth form student progresses to university, although some 40 per cent take a gap year first.
- 3.4 The aims of the King's Foundation are that all pupils should have a fulfilling experience of each stage of schooling and leave as balanced and confident individuals thoroughly equipped for what lies ahead. The Foundation seeks to enable pupils to establish good relationships with others; make the most of their talents; become well qualified through academic achievement and command a range of life skills, enriched by a variety of interests and activities. It also aims to provide responsive pastoral care within an ethos of spiritual awareness, tolerance and mutual respect rooted in Christian values and service to others.
- 3.5 The school is academically selective. Nationally standardised tests in Year 7 indicate that the ability of the majority of the pupil intake is well above the national average but that it also contains a few pupils who are below and some who are far above national norms. The average ability of pupils in the current Years 7-9 exceeds that of the older pupils and previous cohorts. If pupils perform in line with their abilities, their results will be well above the average for all maintained secondary schools nationally.

- 3.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table:

School	NC	School	NC
Lower Fourth	Year 7	Fifth Form	Year 11
Upper Fourth	Year 8	Lower Sixth	Year 12
Lower Remove	Year 9	Upper Sixth	Year 13
Upper Remove	Year 10		

Key Indicators

- 3.7 GCSE

	Most recently completed Year 11			Average for the last three years		
	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
Entered for 5+ subjects (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Achieved 5+ @ A* - C (%)	100	100	100	98.8	99.4	99.1
Achieved 5+ @ A* - G (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average score per candidate*	62.2	65.1	63.5	61	64.9	62.8
Average score per entry*	6.5	6.7	6.6	6.3	6.7	6.5

- Scoring is 8 for GCSE grade A*, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 for grades A – G.

- 3.8 A Level and AS Level

	Most recent Year 13			Average for the last three years		
	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
Average score per candidate (A & AS)	25.9	29.3	27.5	26.1	28.2	27.1
Average score per A level subject entry	7.6	8.7	8.1	7.7	8.4	8

- Scoring is 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 for A-level grades A to E, and 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 for AS-level grades A to E.

- 3.9 Attendance for First Half of Summer Term 2005

	Authorised	Unauthorised
Percentage absence	2.3	1.9

- 3.10 Exclusions Over the Previous 12 Months

Temporary exclusions	Permanent exclusions
8	0

4. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and Progress

- 4.1 Pupils achieve good standards. Pupils' attainment overall in both GCSE and A level is satisfactory in relation to their abilities. Results in GCSE in the last three years overall have been well above the national average for all maintained schools. In particular, pupils achieved results far above maintained school averages in GCSE in art, geography and German. Results at A level in the last three years overall have been well above the national average for all maintained schools. However, results at A level in information technology, physics, religious studies, Spanish and theatre studies were just in line with the national average for all maintained schools.
- 4.2 Pupils' attainment in lessons and written work is good overall and high in the sixth form. Attainment was particularly high in chemistry and geography. The attainment of pupils who have been identified as requiring special educational provision is good. Levels of literacy throughout the school are high and older pupils are extremely competent at making their own notes in class. Pupils of all ages are articulate and most contribute confidently and fluently to discussions in lessons. Mathematical understanding is also very good: pupils apply their mathematical skills appropriately across a range of subjects. Pupils of all ages are competent users of ICT and many employ it very effectively to support their learning.
- 4.3 Pupils' progress is good, including the progress of those identified as requiring special educational provision. Progress in lessons is good and particularly rapid in lessons in mathematics at all ages and in a range of subjects in the sixth form. Pupils' written work in biology and chemistry demonstrates very good progress over time. Nationally standardised measurements indicate that progress to GCSE in the last three years has been above national norms in most subjects, with particularly good progress in art, geography and German. Progress from GCSE to A level is above national norms overall, but with considerable variation between subjects. For example, progress has been well above national norms for the past three years in art, business studies and geography, but below them in the combined subject English language and literature and in religious studies.
- 4.4 Pupils leave the school at the end of the sixth form well equipped for their chosen university courses and prepared to take an active role in society.

Quality of Pupils' Learning, Attitudes and Behaviour

- 4.5 The quality of pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour is very good. Pupils work very well on their own and collaboratively. They listen attentively, ask shrewd questions and are keen to debate ideas. All year groups provided good examples of independent learning. Pupils are well motivated and have excellent relationships with one another and with their teachers. The standard of pupils' behaviour is very high both within and outside the classroom.
- 4.6 Pupils of all ages are very good learners. In class, they settle quickly to work and concentrate hard for substantial periods of time. They work equally well as individuals and in small groups. In all years, pupils listen carefully to their teachers; they ask probing questions and are keen to contribute to discussion. Good examples of independent learning were seen in all year groups, for example, in a Year 11 geography class investigating glaciation and when Year 13 pupils were designing experiments in chemistry. Pupils are positive about their work and they aim to achieve high standards. They are willing to seek help when necessary, either from staff or from one another. Pupils support one another well in class, for example, in

practical work in design and technology and in science, and they listen to one another's contributions with care and respect.

- 4.7 Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good. They enjoy their lessons and participate enthusiastically; for example, Year 7 pupils readily engaged in a lively role-play exercise in English. Pupils have good ICT skills and use resources well. They take advantage of the good library facilities in order to enhance their learning. They are well motivated and work productively in partnership with their teachers. Most pupils are confident and have high self-esteem. They have excellent relationships with one another and with their teachers. The atmosphere in the school is friendly, purposeful and achieving.
- 4.8 The standard of pupils' behaviour is very high both within and outside of the classroom. Pupils are polite and courteous and helpful to visitors. They behave very well when queuing for the dining hall, during assemblies and, most notably, when walking to the sports fields. School Monitors act with maturity and speak well in public. Other senior pupils show initiative and develop their leadership qualities in areas as diverse as inter-house music competitions, the Young Enterprise programme and charity work. Pupils of all ages very successfully take prominent roles in assemblies, in their tutor group meetings, in activities and in sport.
- 4.9 Pupils respect their environment. At the time of the inspection all members of the community were coping extremely well with the disruption of a major building site in the centre of the school. Pupils respond well to the very special character of their surroundings. The lack of graffiti and litter reflects this. The pupils are genuinely proud of belonging to the school and of being part of its life and traditions. This contributes significantly to the pupils' attainment and progress in all curriculum areas.

Attendance

- 4.10 Attendance levels at the school are good and enable pupils to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the school. Clear procedures are followed for registering pupils and establishing the reasons for any absence. The new system, introduced in September 2005, of contact with parents on the first day of absence is working very effectively. The admissions register is well kept and meets all statutory requirements.
- 4.11 A minority of pupils arrives late to lessons, sometimes up to 10 minutes late. This disrupts lessons and is not tackled consistently by all teaching staff.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

- 5.1 The quality of teaching is good. It contributes well to the quality of pupils' attainment and progress and meets the needs of all pupils, including those identified as requiring special educational provision. The teaching was very good in about two-fifths of the lessons seen, excellent in a significant number and very little was unsatisfactory. Teachers know their subjects well. Many communicate vividly in lessons and their enthusiasm encourages pupils to strive to improve. Most teaching challenges pupils to think hard and test out their own conclusions.
- 5.2 Across the curriculum lessons were consistently well prepared. They included suitable activities to meet the abilities of the pupils and involved the pupils actively in the process of learning. Particularly high quality teaching occurred in biology, chemistry, classical civilisation, design and technology, history, mathematics and religious studies. For example, very good use of ICT, clear exposition and very well-planned practical work in a Year 10 chemistry lesson enabled pupils to investigate the effects of catalysts most effectively.
- 5.3 Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They are enthusiastic and committed to helping their pupils make progress. Many successfully inspire their pupils with genuine passion for their subject. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are excellent. Humour is often used to good effect, but is matched with a rigorous concern for accuracy and increased understanding. Much of the teaching has very high expectations: pupils are challenged to think for themselves and to develop their own ideas. For example, in a Year 7 religious studies lesson, the skilful and interesting presentation of a parable inspired pupils to make very relevant comparisons with modern life.
- 5.4 Teachers set clear learning objectives and ensure that they are met. In planning their lessons, many make good use of information gained from marking and assessment. The best teaching uses very skilful questioning and teachers take care to ensure that all pupils participate in lessons, some assiduously alternating between boys and girls for responses. Many lessons progress at a rapid pace and include a variety of appropriate activities. Less successful teaching occurred when the lesson objectives were not clear, the pace was too slow, no variety of approach was offered, or the work lacked challenge.
- 5.5 Good use is made of resources. Very good use of interactive whiteboards was observed in economics and ICT and of digital projectors in several other subjects. Appropriate homework is regularly set.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for teaching?

- 5.6 Yes.

Assessment and Recording

- 5.7 The quality of assessment and recording is good. The school has good systems for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress and these are appropriate for the age of pupils, their particular needs and their stage of development. These are mostly applied consistently and to good effect. The school tracks pupils' progress efficiently and takes appropriate action when a need for learning support or extension work is indicated.
- 5.8 The guidelines for the marking of pupils' work, set out in the staff handbook, allow considerable scope for interpretation. Individual subject departments have also developed

their own policies: some of these, such as chemistry, have very clear policies, but others are less rigorous. As a result, the marking of pupils' work is uneven across and within departments. Some very good practice exists: for example, in the mathematics department, marking is diagnostic and balances encouragement with clear points for improvement. In classics and biology, on the other hand, some teachers' marking is less frequent or helpful.

- 5.9 Assessment procedures are usually accurate, consistent and effective in assisting pupils to make progress. Several departments use feedback well to help pupils improve their academic performance and pupils of all ages are aware of how well they are doing in most subjects. The physical education (PE) department has no system of assessment or for recording pupils' progress, other than for those who are in sports teams.
- 5.10 Grades awarded for both attainment and effort in class and homework are centrally collated twice a term using appropriate software. Tutors discuss these grades individually with their pupils and a copy is sent to parents. Pupils reflect on their performance and write their own targets in a personal profile folder which they review at the end of the following half-term. Some tutors were seen skilfully encouraging pupils to think hard about how they might improve and how to set specific and realistic targets for themselves. Merits and other commendations are also frequently used to reward good work and progress.
- 5.11 The school makes good use of its performance information. Pupils are screened for learning difficulties on arrival and entrance data is used to establish a baseline of pupils' capabilities. Internal examinations are regularly held and the marks are recorded and stored. Various schemes are used to track and compare the performance and potential of the pupils against national comparators.
- 5.12 Assessment information contributes to curriculum development, planning and support for individuals pupils, and in some subjects setting is based upon it. Schemes of work and lesson planning in many departments are appropriately reviewed in the light of examination results and across the year testing.

Curriculum

- 5.13 The school's curriculum is good. It is balanced and broad and it contributes well to the pupils' intellectual, physical and personal attainment and development. A very good programme of extra-curricular activities enriches the pupils' education.
- 5.14 The curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9 covers a wide range of subjects, enabling pupils to make informed choices for GCSE. The school values the contribution of the creative subjects, although they currently receive little time in Year 9. The school plans to remedy this from September 2006. Pupils in Year 7 sample introductory courses in French, German and Spanish in their first term, before choosing one as their first language which they must then continue to GCSE. A second modern language is not taken until Year 9, making it difficult to build on the introductory course in Year 7, and it is studied for only a short time before GCSE choices are made. The school plans to introduce the second modern language in Year 8 from September 2006.
- 5.15 The range of GCSE courses is good, with flexible timetabling allowing a wide variety of pupil choices to be accommodated. All pupils study the three sciences separately, although about one third of a year group is selected to proceed to the double award rather than individual science GCSE examinations. Extra time for science and other GCSE options is added in Year 11, replacing the provision for general religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE).

- 5.16 Good curriculum provision is made in the sixth form. New examination subjects are introduced including business studies, computing, economics and PE. As the option blocks are based on pupils' choices, a wide range of subject combinations is available. Pupils choose four AS subjects in Year 12 and most reduce to three full A level courses in Year 13. All pupils in both years follow an extensive and well-planned key skills programme, that includes PSHE, preparation for higher education and practical activities. About 40 per cent of pupils in Year 12 have been selected to take a stimulating critical thinking course, a pilot scheme this year. The curriculum offers an excellent preparation for higher education.
- 5.17 The curriculum provides good equality of access and opportunities for all pupils to learn and make progress. Pupils are grouped by ability from Year 7 in mathematics and for some modern language teaching in Year 9. Classical civilisation is offered as an alternative to Latin in Year 9 for pupils new to the school who have not studied Latin and for existing pupils who have struggled with the complexities of this language. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are set by ability for English and science. This setting system works well and top sets were observed tackling challenging work and making very rapid progress.
- 5.18 The school has a well-planned programme for pupils requiring special educational provision. All pupils are screened on joining the school and those identified as needing additional help receive an individual education plan (IEP). Copies of these IEPs are given to all who teach these pupils together with advice on how to assist them. Visiting specialist teachers provide additional specialist support on an individual basis. A few pupils in Years 9 to 11 are withdrawn as a group from lessons for additional help with English and mathematics. This tuition takes the place of a second language in Year 9. The school is currently reviewing this provision.
- 5.19 Teaching group sizes at all levels are appropriate. The school provides good challenges for its most able pupils in the majority of subjects both within and outside the academic curriculum. For example, in art a group attends an annual residential course in St Ives, sixth form modern linguists gain work experience in France and Germany, and pupils participate in the Biology Olympiad. The most able mathematicians are encouraged to take additional modules at A level in order to extend their knowledge and breadth of understanding.
- 5.20 The curriculum is planned effectively to provide continuity and progression of learning. For example, in modern languages regular discussion within the department influences curriculum planning, while in music the course is carefully structured to allow a gradual development of skills and understanding. In all subjects, schemes of work are detailed, clear and coherent. Curriculum links with the two junior schools are being further developed to improve continuity and progression.
- 5.21 A very good programme of extra-curricular activities and sport, including exciting opportunities for cultural visits complements the curriculum. The music and drama programmes in particular contribute greatly to the quality of life in the school. Work experience, Young Enterprise and visiting speakers as well as an extensive number of trips and visits further expand and enrich the pupils' education.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the curriculum?

- 5.22 Yes.

Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

- 5.23 The quality of teaching and non-teaching staff is very good. Both teaching and non-teaching staff are well qualified, sufficient in number and effectively deployed. They contribute very well to the life of the school and its efficient running.
- 5.24 The school makes good use of its teachers' experience and expertise. Teachers are very well qualified and hard-working. They encompass a suitable range of experience and age, with a good balance between male and female. The teaching staff are sufficient in number and appropriately deployed. The pupil to teacher ratio is good at 10.5:1 and the staff have sufficient non-teaching time to prepare lessons, mark work, undertake additional responsibilities and participate in extra-curricular activities. The staff contribute fully to the cultural and sporting life of the school.
- 5.25 Systems for inducting new staff into the school are very good, including the provision for newly qualified teachers (NQTs), which meets the regulatory requirements. Regular meetings are held with experienced staff and lesson observations with appropriate feedback take place. This system provides good support and monitoring. In recent years the school has also taken part in the Graduate Teacher Training Programme, training one teacher a year. The school provides a good training scheme and monitors and supports the trainees well.
- 5.26 The professional development system for teachers is sound. Peer review occurs on an 18-month cycle. This system allows staff to identify their own training and development needs and reviewers are appointed from a different subject. Although peer review is designed to run alongside a process of lesson observation and feedback within academic departments, the latter is not rigorously monitored. Taken as a whole, the professional development system does not consistently ensure appropriate subject-based support and development or make certain that middle managers target areas for improvement within their departments.
- 5.27 The budget for continuing professional development is appropriate. Staff are required to bid for funding for courses, but the system is flexible and most requests are met. The school's training provision also includes one whole staff in-service training day per term, with recent topics having included child protection, gender issues and teaching and learning. Appropriate time is also allocated on these days for discussion of departmental and pastoral issues.
- 5.28 The well-qualified non-teaching staff are sufficient in number, effectively deployed and contribute very well to the efficient running of the school. Full- and part-time specialist staff work within and alongside academic departments as technicians and games coaches, in the library, theatre, offices and medical centre, and as grounds, maintenance, catering and cleaning staff. These staff are all highly valued by teachers and pupils alike. An effective review system is in place for all non-teaching staff. Staff work closely together and form a cohesive team.
- 5.29 All necessary procedures are followed in the appointment of both teaching and non-teaching staff and appropriate checks are carried out through the Criminal Records Bureau before employment.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff?

- 5.30 Yes.

Resources for Learning

- 5.31 The quality of resources for learning is good, including the provision of ICT for teaching and learning. The range, quality and accessibility of all other resources are also good and they are used well to support pupils' learning and development.
- 5.32 The provision of ICT for teaching and learning is good. The school has about 250 computers located within departments and in four dedicated ICT rooms; 170 of these computers are available to pupils. Almost all computers are linked to the school's network. The school aims to replace its computers every three or four years. Regular and effective use is made of the four ICT rooms by many departments including art, biology, chemistry, classics, English, geography and physics; during the inspection week 49 group visits were made. Appropriate subject specific software is available in these ICT rooms.
- 5.33 Departmental ICT facilities are also well used and most departments have their own digital projectors. In addition the school has six interactive whiteboards. A recent increase in the number of ICT support staff is intended to reduce the delays between equipment breakdown and repair. An ICT steering committee considers bids from departments and makes recommendations as to purchases; staff see this as a fair system for the allocation of limited resources.
- 5.34 The range, quality and accessibility of all other resources are good and they are used well to support pupils' learning and development. Subject department budgets are generous and the process by which they are agreed is both considered and fair. A good supply of technical equipment includes televisions, videos, overhead projectors and digital cameras. Text book supply is good and access to good photocopying facilities is readily available. Very well-equipped science laboratories support effective practical work. The school has a fleet of five vehicles that enables large numbers of pupils to be transported to and from a wide range of sporting and other extra-curricular activities.

Libraries

- 5.35 The quality of provision in the main school library is good. It is very well organised and used regularly and productively. Many subjects also have separate departmental libraries, some of which are used particularly well.
- 5.36 The library benefits from very good organisation, and members of the school, especially pupils in Years 7-9, use it regularly and effectively. Pupils, particularly older ones, make extensive and productive use of separate departmental libraries, for example in art, English, geography, history, mathematics and music. Such collections support the curriculum well.
- 5.37 The library is currently situated on the edge of the school site in a tower which is a Grade 1 listed building. Access is via a dark, winding staircase, but, despite its remoteness and difficulties of access, the library is an attractive facility and its role and importance have been considerably developed in the last few years. Its limited space, even with the addition of a gallery, is used very efficiently. The library's division into three areas allows group study and individual private study to take place side by side without disruption. Departments are encouraged to use the library for research and project work and during the inspection at least 10 groups of pupils used the library during lesson time, researching topics as varied as fractional distillation, the Brontes and identification. In each case a selection of specialist books was made available using both the school's resources and those of the British Library. All new Year 7 pupils have library periods to introduce them to the facility. A quiz designed to prompt them to explore the whole space ensures good early understanding and familiarity with this important resource.

- 5.38 The stock of books is good in terms of quantity and of quality, with over 15,000 volumes and a policy of regular culling and replacement. The budget allocation is generous but it is not always clear to the teaching staff how books are selected for inclusion. The library has good systems in place to monitor and control book borrowing and is introducing a fingerprint recognition system to ensure very tight control of the updated stock. The library has good ICT provision with five networked computers and a large stock of CDs and videos. It also has facilities to photocopy, laminate and bind. To complete its good, all-round support it holds a wide ranging stock of stationery available for purchase. Each day an average of 300 pupils are logged as visitors, mainly from Years 7-9. During a typical lunch hour at least 50 will visit to read, browse or work.
- 5.39 Management of the library is very good and the library committee offers good support. Considerable developments and improvements have resulted in substantial growth in the use of the facility. Great efforts have been made to increase the level of book borrowing and the range of services offered has grown rapidly. Regular changes of exhibitions and displays, quizzes, talks on research skills for sixth form pupils and visits by authors have all served to make the library more popular. The employment of one full-time and one part-time librarian ensures that the opening hours more than cover the school day and allow ready access to all pupils. These efforts have resulted in a major increase in the use of the school library in recent years. This bodes well for the large new library which was under construction at the time of the inspection.

Premises and Accommodation

- 5.40 The overall quality of accommodation is good, with some very good features. The premises and accommodation support curriculum provision, teaching and learning well and make a positive contribution to pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare.
- 5.41 The school enjoys a very special location in central Worcester adjacent to the cathedral and the River Severn. The latter is used extensively for rowing. The school is fortunate to have use of the cathedral's facilities for assemblies and other school events such as musical productions. The pupils have a genuine appreciation of both the cathedral and the 12th century College Hall, realising that these buildings enrich their lives. The historic buildings and the well-maintained gardens create a calm and civilised atmosphere while providing a stimulating environment for learning.
- 5.42 The buildings and facilities are appropriate for the number, abilities, ages and gender of the pupils. Many of the older buildings around College Green have been skilfully adapted to meet the needs of modern education. Castle House has large refurbished rooms for the teaching of music and the accommodation for ICT in Choir House is spacious, attractive and purposeful. The library, located in the Edgar Tower, offers the pupils a suitable environment for quiet and purposeful study.
- 5.43 Accommodation for individual subjects is very good overall. Many subjects have designated areas with suites of classrooms and office accommodation. They have good natural light and are well ventilated. A very good example is the mathematics department which has a suite of eight classrooms each allocated to an individual member of staff. This arrangement ensures that staff can maintain a very good working environment, including relevant displays of pupils' work. The art department has less satisfactory accommodation; it occupies three separate buildings, with an office and computer area in a cramped attic space. A few other departments, such as classics and modern languages, have specialist rooms in two different buildings, inhibiting smooth communication.

- 5.44 Facilities for specialist subjects such as drama and sport are very good. The excellent theatre allows pupils to participate in drama in a very professional setting. The playing fields are well maintained and are extensive in number and well used for both boys' and girls' sports. Together with the sports hall, fitness suite and indoor swimming pool, they make a significant contribution to pupils' development and play an important role in school life. The school has an adequate number of washbasins and toilets for both boys and girls and these facilities are in a good state of repair.
- 5.45 The standard of decoration throughout the school is good and the teaching staff have worked hard to enhance this with very good displays. Notice boards are plentiful and communicate information effectively to pupils. They stack their bags sensibly on the numerous racks located around the school and the absence of graffiti and very little litter demonstrate that pupils respect their surroundings.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation?

- 5.46 Yes.

Links with Parents and the Community

- 5.47 Links with parents and the community are very good. The school has made significant links with the local community and extensive links with the wider national and international communities. These considerably enrich the pupils' educational experience.
- 5.48 Almost all parents who responded to the ISI pre-inspection questionnaire were satisfied with the information provided by the school, the encouragement given to them to be involved in their children's education and the opportunity to approach the school with any concerns.
- 5.49 Parents receive very good information about the school, individual year groups and their own children's activities and progress. They are made aware of school events by regular communications, including a lively twice-termly bulletin and the creative and performing arts brochure.
- 5.50 Parents are regularly informed about their children's academic progress; they usually receive at least two full reports and attend at least one parents' evening each year. Parents are also provided with interim effort and achievement grades and comments up to twice a term. The quality of the full reports is uneven. The best are very informative but some subject reports are very general and do not use objective criteria. Pastoral reports are thorough and contain good information about pupils' extra-curricular activities. A small number of parents expressed concerns that reports and parents' evenings are not provided frequently enough. Inspection evidence does not support these views. The school handles parental complaints with due care and in accordance with an appropriate complaints procedure.
- 5.51 Parents support the school in a number of ways. They are invited to attend many school events including concerts, plays, performances, exhibitions, lectures, competitions, sports fixtures and charity fund-raising events. For example, in the week of the inspection approximately 250 parents attended a school concert one evening. In addition the parents' committee organises fund raising and helps with the school's charity work.
- 5.52 The school has made significant links with the local community and extensive links, particularly through sport and charity work, with the wider national and international communities. These considerably enrich the pupils' educational experience. The school is ideally placed in the centre of Worcester to offer facilities to local primary schools and other groups that need them, including participants in the Three Choirs Festival. Children from local primary schools attend events such as plays in the school.

5.53 Pupils give time on Saturdays to work in charity shops, and with senior citizens and the disabled. They organise an annual Christmas party for local people who live in sheltered accommodation. Sixth formers hear local primary children read as part of their key skills course. A recent charity event brought together pupils, parents and staff in a sponsored walk in the Malverns, raising a substantial amount for three local charities. The school has long-established links with a school in Nepal and has recently made a link with a village in Tanzania. The school development office has worked hard to forge and maintain links with the Old Vigornians (former pupils) and to utilise their expertise for the benefit of current pupils.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the provision of information?

5.54 Yes.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the manner in which complaints are to be handled?

5.55 Yes.

6. PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PASTORAL CARE

Pupils' Personal Development

- 6.1 The school makes very good educational provision for pupils' spiritual and moral and cultural development. The opportunities provided for social development are excellent.
- 6.2 The opportunities for spiritual development are very good. The school makes very good use of its location, in the grounds of the mediaeval cathedral, and its links with the Anglican foundation to nurture the spiritual development of its pupils. During the inspection the service in the cathedral offered a thought-provoking address which, while using secular imagery, conveyed a strong Christian message. In an assembly, two sixth formers confidently presented contrary arguments to telling effect in a debate on euthanasia. The teaching in religious studies is non-denominational and it welcomes expression of a wide range of opinion. Pupils are encouraged to accept diversity and they know that their views will be respected. Spirituality is taken seriously within the school: a staff committee is currently working to establish a clear understanding of the meaning of spirituality in the school.
- 6.3 The opportunities for moral development are very good. Staff make good use of opportunities to debate moral issues in their subjects. For example, topics covered in history classes, ranging from the Princes in the Tower to Hitler, enable a consideration of moral choice, the use of power, brutality and ethical judgements. The school's Christian tradition, which is vital to the school's ethos, encourages a strong moral code. Great importance is placed on pupils developing their own personal code of conduct and set of values that will be strong enough to withstand the tests of life. Staff set a good example in the way that they treat the pupils.
- 6.4 The opportunities for cultural development are very good. For example, in English pupils study a number of texts from different cultural traditions and in their religious studies course they learn about major world religions, particularly Islam. A biennial Arts Day also raises awareness of other cultures. For the past two years the school has been involved in a European project, that provides a valuable chance for pupils to study political and cultural issues with partner schools in Holland, Poland and Germany. Many other excellent opportunities enable the pupils to develop their cultural awareness, for example visiting professional theatre groups, trips to museums, plays and art exhibitions and residential fieldtrips.
- 6.5 The opportunities for social development are excellent. The school offers a very good PSHE programme with formal classes in Years 7 to 10. In Year 11 the provision is through tutor time and assemblies and in the sixth form it is integrated into the key skills programme. The mentoring system, involving almost all Year 13 pupils in supporting younger pupils, is widely appreciated. The school Monitors establish effective relationships with the younger pupils that promote an atmosphere of co-operation. New pupils settle in very easily: they feel that they are readily welcomed to the school and are proud to belong to it. Pupils' views are respected. The sixth form pupil chosen as head of school chairs regular meetings of the school council and members of the senior management team respond to the matters raised with full and fair consideration. Excellent relationships ensure a mutually supportive ethos in classes and around the school.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils?

- 6.6 Yes.

Pastoral Care, including Welfare and Health & Safety

- 6.7 The provision for pastoral care is very good. The very well managed pastoral, guidance and support systems and the whole-hearted commitment of staff, ensure that the school provides high quality care for the well-being, health and safety of its pupils. The school works hard to maintain a safe environment both for staff and for pupils.
- 6.8 Pastoral care is seen as one of the school's strengths by pupils and by the majority of parents whose opinions were received. This creates an atmosphere in which learning and good behaviour flourish. Pastoral leadership is very good at all levels. Members of staff know their pupils well and monitor them effectively. The high quality of communication between subject teachers and tutors ensures prompt and effective remedial action where it is needed. Pupils find their teachers accessible and responsive and have confidence in the system.
- 6.9 The form teachers in charge of Years 7 and 8 have established very good links with the two King's junior schools to ensure a smooth transition for the pupils and the communication of relevant information to aid their pastoral care. Similarly, records are handed on to the house tutors who assume responsibility for the pupils from Year 9 onwards. Regular meetings of tutors take place within houses and across year groups. Each pupil's progress is recorded in a pupil profile which includes self-appraisal. The time formally available for tutors to see their pupils, particularly on an individual basis, is limited. As was pointed out in the 1999 inspection report, this leads to some inequality of opportunity for pupils to discuss matters privately with their tutors. However, the caring ethos of the school inspires pupils with the confidence to approach any member of staff if they wish to discuss a problem. Pupils in need of support regularly visit the chaplain and the nursing sisters at the medical centre; their accessibility and counsel are widely appreciated. Senior pupils also keep watch over younger pupils and provide support and advice where appropriate.
- 6.10 Well-designed booklets offer information and practical advice at each stage of a pupil's passage through the school. Careers guidance is offered to pupils from Year 10 and prepares them well to make decisions about higher education and adult life. An excellent handbook, a comprehensive reference library and an experienced careers advisor are complemented by discussions with tutors and subject teachers. The careers department arranges work experience for every pupil in Year 12, and further information is provided through an industrial conference, in which former pupils participate. Regular careers talks are presented by members of a wide variety of professions. Additional preparation for life beyond school is supplied in the sixth form key skills course. Pupils say they feel well supported by a wide range of adults in the school.
- 6.11 Very good discipline exists throughout the school, based on clear expectations of considerate behaviour and mutual respect. Pupils not only fulfil these expectations but also show pride in and loyalty to their school. Rules are understood and generally regarded as fair. Appropriate sanctions are in place and good records are kept. Sustained or serious disciplinary action against individuals is seldom needed. Bullying is also rare and pupils are confident that, were it to occur, it would be dealt with promptly and fairly under the rigorous anti-bullying policy. The reward system and the public recognition of achievement are notable features of the life of the school, illustrated by the way in which teachers were heard to congratulate pupils on recent sporting or musical success as they arrive at lessons.
- 6.12 Medical provision for pupils is very good. The medical centre is of appropriate size and is well equipped. A detailed health care policy is supported by clear procedures for accident reporting and medical records for all pupils. Many teaching and non-teaching staff have undergone training in first aid. First-aid kits are available throughout the school and are

catalogued. Where necessary the sister-in-charge can refer pupils to a local doctor retained by the school, or to the local counselling services.

- 6.13 The school's policy for child protection is very good. Protocol and procedures are clearly stated and the designated contact is well known to staff. The school provides suitable training for staff on related issues. The school's child protection committee regularly reviews policies and procedures. Committees have also been established to consider ways of addressing problems posed by eating disorders and long-term illness.
- 6.14 School meals are of a very good standard and the service of meals is highly efficient. Lunchtime menus offer a wide choice of dishes including salad, vegetarian meals and fresh fruit. In morning break, many pupils avail themselves of the fried snacks and fizzy drinks on sale, but this provision is now under review.
- 6.15 Health and safety procedures are mostly good and an appropriate major incident plan has been drawn up. The school is working hard to maintain a safe environment for staff and pupils. It retains a highly experienced health and safety advisor. Clear and thorough policies are in place. All departments have carried out risk assessments and a member of the senior management team has conducted a safety audit of each area of the school, which is to be repeated annually. It is the responsibility of the member of staff in charge of health and safety in each area of the school to report any faults or causes for concern. Individual fire alarms are checked regularly. Fire drills from individual buildings are held twice a year in accordance with statutory requirements. Safety procedures for the school minibuses are appropriate and the necessary records are kept. Very clear policies promote the safety of pupils on school trips.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils?

- 6.16 Yes.

7. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Governance and Management

- 7.1 Governance and management are good. Governance and leadership at the most senior level provide clear educational direction for the school and commitment to ensuring that the school's aims are met. Detailed and appropriate short- and long-term development planning supports the school's aims, values and policies very well.
- 7.2 Very strong role models at the highest level ensure that the desired ethos successfully permeates the school. The senior management team, comprising the headmaster, second master, second deputy, director of studies and bursar, work very closely together and set very high standards for staff and pupils. All share a clear vision for the development of the school and work tirelessly to ensure that the school's aims are implemented in full.
- 7.3 The governors provide shrewd strategic guidance. Frequent contact with the long-serving chairman of governors gives strong support to senior management. Governors have a wide range of appropriate expertise and make a good contribution to the school. Many of the governing body involve themselves closely in the life of the school, visiting regularly and attending events. A governor appropriately sits on the school's health and safety committee and particular governors have designated responsibility for child protection issues. Governors play an important role in the strategic planning process. Detailed reports on the work of the school are provided for governors at their termly meetings which are attended by several of the senior management team. The governing body is that for the King's Foundation as a whole, but it devotes an appropriate amount of its time to consideration of issues relating to the senior school. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met.
- 7.4 The school's development planning, which is widely shared in its early stages, is very good. Groups of staff from all levels in the school, selected by the senior management team, form scenario and strategy committees which begin the strategic review process each year. The whole staff discuss the draft plans just before they are presented to the governors for approval. The school development plan has a large number of targets but they are carefully organised into different sections with appropriate resource implications, timescales, personnel responsible and success criteria. The planning at different levels and in different areas of the school is very clearly linked. Governors and senior managers ensure that human and material resources are sufficient to support good teaching and learning.
- 7.5 Structures and management arrangements are well defined and provide a framework which is able to support effective management. The headmaster's annual formal interviews with heads of department ensure good accountability. The senior management team undertook a demanding programme of departmental reviews in the two years prior to the inspection, which involved formal lesson observation and scrutiny of pupils' work. However, routine monitoring by both senior and middle management is not always sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistent implementation of all policies and procedures. Senior managers do not always ensure that heads of department not only identify any shortcomings within their teams, but also endeavour to remedy them. Not all heads of department regularly observe lessons or monitor marking. Some very good practice exists, for example, in chemistry and geography, that could usefully be more widely shared.
- 7.6 Communication within the school is good. A wide range of regular management meetings takes place at all levels throughout the school. The quality of the management of pastoral care receives good attention. Subject departments have less formal arrangements for meetings. Some departments meet rather infrequently to discuss issues formally, but some very good practice was seen, for example, in mathematics.

- 7.7 Day-to-day routines and administration work well, although the volume of policies and detailed instructions in the staff handbook is rather daunting. The secretarial and administrative staff provide calm, effective and efficient support. Records are very well kept. Communication with parents and the wider community is very good.

8. ACHIEVEMENT AND QUALITY IN SUBJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

English

- 8.1 Pupils achieve good standards. Attainment at GCSE and in A level literature is good in relation to pupils' abilities. Results in English and English literature at GCSE from 2002 to 2004, the last three years for which comparative figures were available, have been well above the national average for all maintained schools, with a high proportion of top grades. Results at A level in both courses have been above the national average for all maintained schools. The percentage of A and B grades in A level English literature has been very high for the past three years, while candidates for the combined language and literature course have achieved sound results.
- 8.2 Pupils' attainment in class and written work is good overall; it was often very good and occasionally excellent. Pupils of all abilities achieve good standards in both written and oral work. A Year 7 class drafted lively and creative ideas for individual characterisation work. Year 9 pupils capably analysed features in an extract from a short story at word, sentence and text level. A high ability Year 11 set spoke enthusiastically about a Hemingway novel, offering very articulate and incisive comments. Similarly, a Year 12 group sustained a high level of focussed analysis of style and theme in their discussion of *Wuthering Heights*. Speaking and listening activities are a particular strength across the whole age range. Pupils show confidence in both pair and group work, and most are articulate when speaking individually in front of the whole class. Most pupils are willing to express opinions which are both personal and sometimes tentative, knowing that they will receive respect and support from their peers and teachers.
- 8.3 The progress of pupils is good overall and often rapid. Members of a Year 9 class progressed securely in their understanding of colour symbolism and technical vocabulary while studying a poem. A Year 12 language and literature group made rapid progress when analysing Joyce's stylistic choices in a story from *Dubliners*. Scrutiny of pupils' written work revealed good progress over time, particularly during the GCSE course and in the sixth form.
- 8.4 The quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour is good overall; it was often very good and occasionally excellent. Pupils are usually lively, highly articulate, eager and responsive to one another and the teacher. They work very well in pairs and respond well to whole class teaching. Outstanding participation was observed in a Year 7 role-play exercise, while Year 9 pupils took part enthusiastically in a lesson on accent and dialect. In the sixth form, pupils take responsibility for their own learning and are assiduous in their note-taking. They are equally ready to engage without prompting in very academic oral explorations of literary features in a manner that might more commonly be found in a higher education institution. Their written work is usually well presented.
- 8.5 The quality of teaching is good overall. It is often very good and on occasion excellent. Teachers are well grounded in their subject and establish a very good rapport with their pupils. Their expectations are high and these are made clear to pupils. Demanding literary texts are used in a very effective way with younger age groups. Lessons are conducted at a good and often rapid pace. Challenging questioning ensures good progress. Mixed ability classes and groups set by ability are handled appropriately, with a suitable range of activities to maintain pupils' interest. In the sixth form, seminar-style leadership enhances pupils' learning. Lesson planning is thorough and marking is personalised, supportive and often formative. Objective measures of long-term progress are not yet used to target improvement. ICT had been used to good effect in the production of newspaper displays based on "Holes"

and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and access to an ICT suite is timetabled on a regular basis. The department is starting to incorporate the use of a digital projector and screen into its work, although this facility is at present installed in only one room.

- 8.6 Leadership and management are very good. Documentation is thorough, with well-defined aims and procedures, and the departmental development plan provides a clear focus for improvement. The department stresses team work and consultation and colleagues meet regularly, although not formally, in the departmental base. Accommodation is largely suitable and attractively decorated, both with pupils' work and a range of other relevant and stimulating materials. All full-time English teachers are based in their own rooms. A well-planned programme of activities, such as theatre visits and workshops, enriches pupils' education. Writing for a wider readership, for example in the school magazine, is also encouraged.

Mathematics

- 8.7 Pupils achieve good standards in mathematics. Pupils' attainment in GCSE and A level is good in relation to their abilities. At GCSE, results are well above the national average for all maintained schools from 2002 to 2004, the last three years for which comparative figures were available, and in 2005, more than four-fifths of candidates achieved grades A* to B. Results at A level are well above the national average for all maintained schools from 2002 to 2004, the last three years for which comparative figures were available, with more than two-thirds of candidates in mathematics and all candidates in further mathematics gaining grade A or B in 2005.
- 8.8 In lessons and written work, attainment at all ages is good and often very good. For example, pupils in Year 10 used suitable graphs to illustrate the effect of rotations on geometrical shapes and provided well-expressed generalisations. A Year 12 class formulated linear programming problems and efficiently solved the inequalities by graphical methods. Pupils show care with written work: attention to detail was apparent, with notes and exercises kept in well-organised sections.
- 8.9 Pupils' progress is rapid. Those in top ability sets showed particularly rapid progress; for example, a Year 11 set used their current algebraic skills to move on to manipulating relatively complicated expressions involving surds. Pupils' progress is enhanced by the supportive classroom environment, which encourages pupils to ask questions and to get involved in explanations of new work and techniques.
- 8.10 The quality of learning and behaviour is very good. Pupils have a purposeful approach and they are keen to express their interest in the subject. A real enthusiasm and willingness to share their enjoyment was evident in the quick responses given to teacher questioning in a Year 7 class starting work on sets. Pupils approach written work with a sense of urgency and quickly focus on the task. Year 9 pupils showed confidence in tackling the substitution of negative numbers into formulae. They learned from their mistakes and took careful note of their teacher's advice and assistance.
- 8.11 The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons effectively. The atmosphere in lessons is always constructive and pupils are allowed time and opportunities to develop their understanding. Pupils' contributions to discussions are valued. Teachers make the key points of mathematical content clearly, using accurate terminology or symbolism as appropriate. In a Year 12 class excellent use was made of a digital projector with graph drawing software to illustrate the implications of differentiation. Teachers know their pupils well and pace lessons and target help as required. The style of teaching is predominantly teacher-led explanation. The department is considering alternative

teaching styles and is aware that some topics and ability levels could benefit from a variation of approach. Marking is usually good and regularly includes helpful comments.

- 8.12 Pupils are grouped by ability in Years 7 to 11 which allows teaching and pupil tasks to be tailored closely to abilities. Pupils are allocated to groups from the results of cross-year tests, their work in class and homework and, in Year 7, baseline tests. A recent innovation is a nine-module course leading to A level mathematics and AS further mathematics that is intended to prepare good mathematicians for the needs of higher education courses with a significant mathematical content.
- 8.13 Management and leadership of the department are good. Regular department meetings are held, ensuring that all members of the department are involved in future planning and development, as well as contributing to the comprehensive department handbook. Responsibility for various aspects of planning and co-ordination is appropriately devolved. Mutual lesson observation within the department is as yet not fully implemented. The excellent departmental accommodation, in a suite of eight rooms, each allocated to a particular teacher, enhances the educational experience for both pupils and staff. Five rooms have ceiling-mounted digital projectors and, with suitable training, this recent initiative should offer opportunities for the department to develop new teaching materials.

Science

- 8.14 Specialist teachers teach the three separate sciences throughout the school. Pupils are set in Years 10 and 11 on the basis of their results in the Year 9 internal examinations. Two sets take the double award GCSE science and the others take three separate sciences. All follow a common curriculum during Year 10 to enable movement between the sets to take place. As there is no overall head of science the heads of the separate departments take it in turn to oversee the administration required for the double award. Results in GCSE double award science over the last three years have been above the national average for all maintained schools.

Biology

- 8.15 Pupils achieve good standards. Pupils' attainment in GCSE is satisfactory in relation to their abilities. Results in GCSE in the years 2002 to 2004 were above the national average for all maintained schools. Pupils' attainment in A level is satisfactory in relation to their abilities. Results in A level over the years 2002 to 2004 were above the national average for maintained schools. In 2005, a year for which no comparable data are yet available, the results in both examinations were even better than in previous years.
- 8.16 Pupils' attainment in class and in their written work is good. They have a good basis of factual knowledge, understanding and practical skills. For example, almost all members of a Year 10 class were able to measure the loss in mass in transpiring leaves and relate it to the distribution of stomata in the leaf. Year 7 pupils showed good understanding of classification keys and produced and tested their own key. A class in Year 13 built models that accurately elucidated the process of cell division.
- 8.17 Pupils' progress is good; during lessons in each age group, it was never less than good and was often rapid. Pupils leave lessons with improved practical skills or increased understanding. A Year 13 class used models to improve their knowledge and understanding of the mechanism of muscle action and relate it to the microstructure of the sarcomere. Year 9 pupils made good use of ICT to examine critically experimental protocols that were not suitable for laboratory work in schools and increased their understanding of the scientific method. Pupils' written work reveals good progress over time.

- 8.18 The quality of learning and behaviour is very good. Pupils' attitude to learning is very good and sometimes exceptional. They are highly motivated and in lessons work very productively on their own or in small groups. They respond very well to questions and are always willing to seek help. Pairs of Year 12 pupils co-operated well on problem-solving exercises concerning chromatography. However, little evidence was seen of independent learning.
- 8.19 The quality of teaching is very good. In some lessons, it was excellent and in none was it less than good. Good subject knowledge and awareness of the requirements of the external examination system are used effectively. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils which enables very good learning. Varied tasks, including practical work, computerised presentations, and excellent use of ICT, help to maintain the interest of pupils of all abilities. The marking, assessment and recording of pupils' work allow appropriate monitoring of pupils' performance. Although most marking is positive and accurate, with helpful comments and useful targets being set, some marking lacks depth and gives little direction for improvement.
- 8.20 Leadership and management of the biology department are good. Appropriate schemes of work are in place and departmental documentation is helpful. The laboratories are well stocked with consumables and apparatus and house some first-class displays of pupils' work. Some excellent work sheets have been produced. Two part-time, experienced technicians ably support the work of the department. Suitable emphasis is placed upon health and safety matters and pupils usually work safely. Appropriate risk assessments are in place and more are being developed.

Chemistry

- 8.21 Pupils achieve high standards. Pupils' attainment in GCSE is satisfactory in relation to their abilities. Results in GCSE chemistry examinations over the years 2002 to 2004 have been above the national average for all maintained schools. Pupils' attainment in A level is good in relation to their abilities. Results in A level chemistry over the years 2002 to 2004 were well above the national average for maintained schools. In 2005, a year for which no comparable data are yet available, the results in both examinations were above those in previous years.
- 8.22 In class, and in their written work, attainment by pupils of all ages is high. Pupils show a good basis of factual knowledge and practical skills and their application of knowledge is good. A Year 9 class successfully conducted a practical investigation into the effect of surface area on the rate of reaction. Year 13 pupils accurately determined the equilibrium constant for the hydrolysis of an ester.
- 8.23 Pupils' progress in chemistry is good during lessons across all age groups and often rapid. Their understanding develops well, as was seen in a Year 13 class where pupils constructed appropriate apparatus and used it to identify and test the purity of certain chemical derivatives by melting point analysis. Pupils' written work demonstrates very good progress over time.
- 8.24 The quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour is very good. Pupils are well motivated and work productively as individuals or in small groups. They listen carefully and maintain their concentration well. They show an interest in the subject and are very willing to offer answers and ideas, and to seek help when it is required. Year 11 pupils worked constructively to evaluate challenging material and draw conclusions about appropriate energy conversions from different fuels.

- 8.25 The quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned with good use being made of appropriate teaching materials. Teachers use their extensive subject knowledge and awareness of the requirements of the external examinations very well to maximise pupils' examination prospects. They have very good relationships with their pupils: the sense of shared enjoyment in lessons is exhilarating. Many lessons are supported by the excellent use of ICT and other appropriate materials produced within the department. This variety of tasks, with an emphasis on practical work and computer simulations, further stimulates the interest of pupils in the subject. The marking, assessment and recording of pupils' work enable close monitoring of their performance. Marking is positive and accurate enabling pupils to evaluate their own performance and to make good progress.
- 8.26 Leadership and management of the chemistry department are very good. Appropriate schemes of work are in place and departmental documentation is informative, with clear medium- and long-term aims. Alternative specification options at A level allow pupils flexibility in their approach to the study of chemistry. Recently renovated laboratories are of a high standard and plans are well advanced to update the remaining accommodation. The laboratories are well stocked with consumables, apparatus and ICT equipment, all of which are used to good effect. Experienced part-time technicians support the work of the department well. The department has an appropriate health and safety policy and suitable emphasis is placed upon health and safety matters. Risk assessments have been developed for individual experiments and are deployed effectively.

Physics

- 8.27 Pupils attain good standards. Pupils' attainment at GCSE and A level is sound in relation to their abilities. From 2002 to 2004, the last three years for which comparative figures were available, results at GCSE have been above and at A level they have been in line with the national average for all maintained schools.
- 8.28 Pupils' attainment in lessons is good. The attainment of boys and girls is equally good but more boys than girls opt for A level physics. Confidence in practical skills enables pupils to complete experiments accurately and efficiently and gives them time to use the knowledge gained in applications for problem solving. Pupils are also keenly observant. In a Year 7 lesson pupils noticed that an aluminium rod was able to conduct electricity from end to end but not across the diameter. When the observation was posed to the class a reason was soon forthcoming.
- 8.29 Pupils' progress in physics is good. At all ages pupils are quite quick to grasp difficult concepts. In a Year 13 lesson pupils were deriving the gas equation and made rapid progress in applying their knowledge of particle movement to the terms in the equation. This enabled them to reinforce their learning by practising the use of the equation before the end of the lesson.
- 8.30 Learning and behaviour are good overall and often very good. Pupils are competent learners, generally well motivated and conscientious. They usually listen to and respect one another's opinions and they work together well in small groups. They are confident enough to venture explanations for their observations, as was seen in a Year 8 lesson on the use of filters.
- 8.31 Teaching is good. The lessons are generally carefully planned and have clear objectives. The best are well paced. In some lessons good use was made of computers and digital projectors to model and reinforce experimental results and to free staff to interact more with pupils. Excellent teaching was observed in a Year 8 lesson when ICT was used imaginatively to teach concepts of colour.

- 8.32 Leadership and management of the department are good. The department is in the process of writing common assessments which will assist lesson planning. The teaching is greatly enhanced by the well-maintained resources, the laboratory technicians and activities such as the robotics and astronomy clubs. Staff and pupils use ICT resources appropriately to improve learning. The department has recently introduced a weekly work habits session for pupils of all ages for poorly completed or late work, with the aim of improving attainment at GCSE and, in particular, A level. Although attention is paid to risk assessments in experiments and the use of apparatus, only a generic health and safety policy is in place and this does not include documented procedures for the use and testing of radioactive materials.

Art

- 8.33 Pupils achieve high standards in art. From 2002 to 2004, the last three years for which comparative figures were available, results in GCSE have been far above the average for maintained secondary schools, with over four-fifths of candidates gaining A* or A. Results at A level over the same period have been well above the same average, and over three-quarters of the entrants have gained grade A. In 2005 five A level candidates were given an award by the Examination Board for scoring among the top ten marks in the country.
- 8.34 Pupils' overall attainment is good and often very good. It is good in Years 7 to 9, where they show a competent awareness of different skills and techniques, and very good in Years 10 to 13, where pupils demonstrate a high standard of composition and a willingness to make bold experiments with colour and technique. Recent workshops with professional artists have enhanced pupils' artistic appreciation, and enabled them to analyse work and make connections between it and their own. It has also inspired the direction of their coursework pieces.
- 8.35 Progress is good in Years 7 to 9 where the initial training is sound. Thereafter progress is rapid and pupils participate with a swiftly developing confidence which is reflected in the quality of their work. Year 10 pupils responded imaginatively to a thematic unit inspired by the colour, structure and light of night-time Tokyo. Each piece of work was refined with growing assurance and perception, and was supported by a study of selected 20th century Japanese artists. Year 11 pupils were inspired by the stimulus of residential fieldwork in Cornwall, conveying most powerfully the colour and atmosphere of the rugged coastal scenery.
- 8.36 The quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour overall is good, often very good, but very occasionally less than satisfactory. Pupils are well motivated and usually listen carefully to instructions in the preliminary stages. However, younger pupils occasionally took too long to settle down to work. Pupils respond thoughtfully to teachers' instructions but are not inhibited from trusting their own judgement. They are noticeably articulate in explaining their reaction to the thematic material and show clear enthusiasm for their pieces, developing a proud sense of ownership. They frequently work on them out of lesson time.
- 8.37 The quality of teaching overall is very good. The best lessons were meticulously planned and ensured all pupils made good progress. The syllabus provides a good framework for the development of basic artistic skills. Every pupil has an individual programme, so that care is taken to support the less able by personal attention but flexibility remains to encourage the blossoming of individual talent. The especially gifted artists are inspired to be very creative and ambitious. Advice to examination candidates is frequently conveyed in a personal note, which offers praise and encouragement as well as suggestions for possible developments.
- 8.38 Leadership and management are good and administration is carried out with a high level of competence. The department is housed in three separate buildings, which means staff

regularly have to move between the different sites. Sixth form pupils have their own dedicated work area in separate studios but space is very limited for the junior classes. The departmental office and the computers are in a cramped attic space. Planning permission has been granted for the construction of a new art block.

- 8.39 The department benefits from the presence of two artists-in-residence and the services of two part-time technicians. Regular professional exhibitions are held in the John Moore Theatre and the artwork of examination candidates is displayed for parents and the general public. Pupil artwork is also on view in several prominent locations around the school, and in a number of external venues, most notably the cathedral, attracting very favourable comments from visitors. The work of the department is further enhanced by gallery visits and foreign study tours, most recently to New York.

Classics

- 8.40 Pupils achieve good standards. Pupils' attainment in Latin at GCSE is good in relation to their abilities and at A level is high. In classical civilisation pupils' attainment is satisfactory at both GCSE and A level in relation to their abilities. No national comparative data are available for Latin and classical civilisation as separate subjects in public examinations. However, all A level candidates for Latin in the past three years have achieved A grades.
- 8.41 Pupils' attainment in lessons and in the work examined was good in Latin and very good in classical civilisation. Year 7 Latin pupils already understood the inflected nature of the language. Year 11 pupils studying an Ovid extract had a good knowledge of literary devices and read aloud in Latin quite confidently and accurately. Sixth form classical civilisation pupils responded very sensitively to texts in translation, displaying a sophisticated understanding of the concepts. In a Year 13 class pupils were articulate in a discussion of the imagery Virgil uses in his portrayal of Dido and they made pertinent comparisons with Phaedra and Medea, recalling material from their previous studies.
- 8.42 Pupils' progress in Latin is good and in classical civilisation it is rapid. All the lessons observed included review and consolidation of previous knowledge. Pupils' written work shows good progress over time. Within a Year 10 classical civilisation lesson pupils gained a very clear understanding of how to interpret examination essay questions and how to structure their answers effectively.
- 8.43 The quality of pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour is always good and often very good. In every lesson pupils were motivated, eager and interested. Relationships between pupils are excellent: they work very well together in pairs and as a whole class. Pupils listen to one another carefully and build well on one another's ideas. They are very willing to ask questions or to suggest their own original interpretations. Good examples of independent working and research were seen, for example, in a Year 13 Latin lesson where a pupil made a carefully prepared and thoughtful presentation on part of Virgil's *Aeneid*.
- 8.44 The quality of teaching is good; it was always at least sound and sometimes excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and most inspire their pupils. They have high expectations and insist on grammatical accuracy in language lessons. The best lessons progressed at a very rapid pace; in the less successful lessons the pace was too slow and little variety of task was offered. Very good relationships with pupils are characterised by frequent use of humour. English derivations are used to aid vocabulary learning and relevant comparisons are made between the ancient and modern world. ICT is used well in lessons.
- 8.45 Leadership is good, although the department is managed with a light touch. The specialist teaching rooms are split between two buildings some distance apart and this impedes team

working. The department's marking policy is not prescriptive: marking varies from very detailed, constructive and useful comments to infrequent and cursory ticks. Pupils are encouraged to be involved in a good range of relevant extra-curricular activities, including a weekly classics club, Latin reading competitions, visits to classical plays, sites and museums, and regular trips to Greece and Italy.

Geography

- 8.46 Pupils achieve high standards. Their attainment in GCSE from 2002 to 2004, the last three years for which comparative figures were available, was high in relation to their abilities and far above the national average for all maintained schools, two thirds of candidates achieving grade A* or A. At A levels pupils' attainment is good in relation to their abilities and their examination results have been well above the national average for all maintained schools, with four out of five entries being awarded A or B grades.
- 8.47 Pupils' attainment is high in lessons and in their written work. Pupils in a Year 8 class annotated correctly and in good detail slides showing varying stages of river development. Pupils in Year 12 constructed complex reports based on data from fieldwork studies, using their considerable ICT skills. Pupils of all ages showed a good understanding of subject matter.
- 8.48 Pupils' progress in lessons in geography is rapid in each age group. Progress over time is good in Years 7 to 11 and in Years 12 to 13 rapid. Allocating too much time for pupils to read aloud from the textbook in lessons in Years 7 and 8 occasionally hampered progress.
- 8.49 The quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour is very good at all stages. Pupils are disciplined, highly motivated and work hard in class. Examination of files and exercise books indicated that thorough and well-presented homework is the norm. Pupils are keen to become involved in discussion and they answer questions confidently. Good examples of independent learning were seen in a Year 11 glacial exercise and in a Year 12 demographic 'push-pull' data model task.
- 8.50 The quality of teaching is good. The teaching was very good in a significant number of lessons and occasionally excellent. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of all pupils and weaker pupils receive quiet but effective support. Teachers are very secure in their knowledge and understanding of their subject. Good examples of challenge were seen in a number of classes and a Year 12 class working on coastal profile variants exhibited a scholarly approach to their task. The teaching makes good use of resources including computers, projectors, videos and overhead projectors. An atmosphere of mutual respect is a feature of all lessons. Marking is regular and thorough with constructive comments used effectively and by all teachers. Stickers are used frequently to encourage further good work. Full records are used to create strategies for improving individual pupils' learning.
- 8.51 The quality of leadership and management is excellent. The department has clear aims within its development plan and targets are regularly set, monitored and achieved. Departmental organisation is extremely efficient with regular meetings providing the opportunities to review policy, exchange ideas and to review pupils' progress. Teaching and learning are closely monitored. The accommodation is good, well looked after and full of pupils' work on display. ICT provision in a separate and well appointed work area is excellent and pupils use it regularly. The programme of residential and non-residential fieldwork is extensive and it involves all members of the department.

History

- 8.52 Pupils achieve good standards in history through Years 7 to 11 and very good standards in Years 12 and 13. Pupils' attainment at GCSE is good in relation to their abilities, and high in A level examinations. Results at both levels from 2002 to 2004, the last three years for which comparative figures were available, have been well above the national average for all maintained schools.
- 8.53 Pupils' attainment in speaking and writing is high at all ages, and especially so in Years 12 and 13. Pupils argue with confidence and have a good understanding of the variety of interpretations available to the historian. By Years 10 and 11, their vocabulary and grasp of concepts is good, and in Years 12 and 13 it is very good. A Year 11 class studying the rise of the Nazi Party made perceptive comments and showed a good ability to draw conclusions from evidence, while a Year 13 class discussed the nature of Bonapartist autocracy with considerable sophistication.
- 8.54 Pupils' progress in lessons and over longer periods is good overall and especially rapid in sixth form written work. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make good progress in their writing, expressing their ideas and sustaining arguments with increasing skill. This progress continues in the GCSE classes and by the sixth form pupils are rapidly acquiring a capacity for balancing points of view and synthesising ideas. A lesson on Richard III in Year 12 underlined the progress pupils had made in understanding the ambiguities of his reign.
- 8.55 The quality of learning and behaviour is very good in all years. Pupils listen attentively, ask shrewd questions and are keen to debate ideas. They enjoy extremely good relationships with their teachers. Pupils show a considerable appetite for learning, whether in Year 8 examining weapons used at the Battle of Bosworth Field or in Year 13 discussing the reasons for Napoleon's downfall.
- 8.56 Teaching is very good. Teachers are well informed, highly organised and make consistent efforts to challenge their pupils. They use a variety of approaches suited to different ages of pupils, ranging from their asking Year 7 pupils to draw up alternative plans for William the Conqueror at Hastings to analysing examination criteria with Year 13. Humour and a relaxed, stimulating manner characterised the teaching observed.
- 8.57 Management is very effective and leadership strong. The departmental handbook and schemes of work are models of clarity. The department's resources are very good. A wide and up-to-date range of books is supplemented by an extensive collection of video tapes. Two rooms are equipped with video projectors. While some rooms are cramped, every effort is made to decorate them with posters and pupils' work. The school's archives are the responsibility of the department and afford excellent opportunities for pupils to engage in first-hand historical research, an example of which is the recent outstanding commemorative history of the school.

Modern Foreign Languages

- 8.58 Pupils achieve good standards. Their attainment in public examinations is mostly good in relation to their abilities. Results in GCSE from 2002 to 2004, the last three years for which comparative figures were available, have been well above the average for maintained schools in French and Spanish and far above in German. Candidates in German have scored almost 50% more A* and A grades than the national average. At A level, the number of A and B grades in French and German is well above the national average, and in Spanish it is in line with it.

- 8.59 In Years 7 to 11, attainment is satisfactory, although in a number of lessons observed it was good. In the brief 'taster' courses for Year 7 in each language it is in line with the wide range of ability of the pupils. In Years 8 and 9 most pupils understand instructions and explanations given in the foreign language, but many have difficulty in producing oral responses of more than a word or two. The pronunciation of many pupils is weak, but their attainment in written work is never less than sound. In Year 11, most pupils have a good command of the structures and vocabulary required for GCSE and attain a good standard of listening and reading comprehension in relation to their abilities. Their responses in oral work, however, are often halting and poorly pronounced. Sixth form pupils display a good understanding of the material being studied. Their ability to engage in dialogue is high in relation to their abilities. Presentation of written work varies in quality. The best is neatly written and well organised.
- 8.60 Pupils' overall progress is good, usually sound in Years 7 to 11, and occasionally very good in Years 12 and 13. The written work in Years 10 and 11 shows that most pupils assimilate more complex grammatical structures and acquire an appropriate wider vocabulary. However, the facility to respond orally and the pronunciation of the foreign languages do not improve significantly over time. In the sixth form, progress is good. For example, in Year 12 French and Spanish lessons, pupils showed an emerging ability to handle increasingly sophisticated material and to express opinions on new topics both orally and in writing. Students of German in Year 13 discussed current political issues and responded well to both printed and audio-visual material. Pupils' progress is more rapid when they encounter consistent use of the foreign language and a variety of challenging tasks than when English is the principal medium of classroom communication and teachers' expectations are relatively low.
- 8.61 The overall quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour is good; it is often very good and occasionally excellent. Most pupils show a willingness to participate in oral work and to use their skills and knowledge. They behave well in class, assimilate instructions rapidly, co-operate well in pair-work and settle down to individual work efficiently. They usually ask questions in English and, particularly up to Year 11, rely on the teacher for information rather than using their course book. Pupils readily avail themselves of the facilities for listening practice in the multimedia centre, such as live news on satellite television, and sixth form pupils undertake personal research. A Russian club which meets in the lunch hour is well attended, as is a beginners' course in Japanese organised by a self-taught pupil.
- 8.62 The quality of teaching is good overall and in some lessons it is very good. Lessons are well planned to meet the differing needs and abilities of the pupils, but in a number of lessons up to Year 11, a faster pace could profitably have been set and more challenge offered. In some lessons, but by no means all, equal attention is paid to all four skills, and a good variety of tasks is set. The best teaching raises expectations appropriately, with the use of imaginative visual stimuli to engage pupils. For example, a Year 12 French class were given an entertaining visual stimulus to arouse their interest, supported by well-presented and targeted hand-outs. Flash cards and pupil participation were deployed to very good effect with a low-ability Year 9 French set, while lively audio material and successful involvement of the whole class stimulated beginners in Year 7 Spanish. Conversely, some lessons had little variety of activity or pupil involvement.
- 8.63 Departmental marking policies are followed uniformly, and relate to examination criteria where appropriate. Detailed correction, positive comments and helpful advice are given, but little correction or re-writing by pupils is required. The use of ICT is being developed following the recent installation of a computerised language laboratory. The lessons observed included little use of audio-visual materials. The pupils' experience of the languages they are studying is greatly enhanced by a wide-ranging programme of visits and

exchanges. Teaching accommodation is good, but is split between two buildings. Excellent displays of pupils' work and records of visits to France, Germany and Spain adorn the classrooms and corridors. Sound reproduction in the larger classrooms is limited by the lack of additional speakers at the back.

- 8.64 The leadership and management of the department are very good. Routine administration is smooth and the department meets regularly. Schemes of work are detailed and clear and appropriate policies are in place. Clear objectives for the future have been established. Appropriate monitoring, discussion of methodology, and feedback from in-service training courses ensure ongoing reviews of departmental practices. However, good practice, particularly in relation to the use of the foreign language and of audio-visual teaching aids, is not shared widely enough.

Music

- 8.65 Pupils achieve high standards. Their attainment is high at GCSE and good at A level in relation to their abilities. Results at both levels have been well above the national averages for all maintained schools from 2002 to 2004, the last three years for which comparative figures were available, with high proportions of top grades.
- 8.66 In lessons observed and work seen, pupils' attainment is good. In Year 7, the more able pupils can compare differences in pitch and rhythm as well as tempo and dynamics when describing the mood of a piece. A Year 10 class used serialist composition techniques successfully, the best handling a variety of musical textures with confidence, and all using ICT well. Year 13 analytical essays reveal a fine maturity of understanding and an ability to listen and read beyond the work studied in class.
- 8.67 The progress of pupils is usually sound at all levels, and often good, particularly in the examination years. Good progress is most evident when pupils are given the opportunity to work at their own pace, especially in lessons on compositional techniques and when listening tasks are explicit. Progress is less rapid when the wide range of musical abilities in the group is allowed to inhibit the more able pupils.
- 8.68 The quality of pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour is good. Pupils concentrate well and clearly enjoy engaging with the subject. An encouraging atmosphere pervades the classroom, although in a Year 12 lesson the pupils were somewhat reluctant to show enthusiasm for musical analysis.
- 8.69 The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent. They are able to answer pupils' questions with confidence and authority. In the best lessons, teachers varied the pace and offered practical illustrations either by singing or playing on the piano, but some presented limited opportunities for the pupils to make discoveries for themselves.
- 8.70 Leadership and management are good. The department works well together to ensure that the performing life of the school thrives and the pupils' strengths are well utilised. The curriculum is broad, including popular music and music from other cultures. Accommodation is very good. The newly refurbished music school is an attractive building with a large number of teaching and practice rooms and a good technology suite, although the recording studio has yet to be fully used and storage space for pupils' instruments is inadequate. Resources are good. The department has a healthy collection of instruments, a good selection of CDs and reference books and an extensive library of choir, orchestral, band and chamber music to support ensembles.
- 8.71 The practical extra-curricular activity within the department is very good. Despite considerable constraints within the school day, high levels of participation are achieved and

standards are very good, particularly in the choirs and orchestras. At present, chamber music opportunities are not prominent and scope for developing more brass and jazz ensembles exists. Very many individual lessons are taught each week, and those observed were excellent, positive in tone, encouraging in manner, and well paced with pupils showing good preparation and initiative in their learning. Enrichment is provided by a wide range of other musical activities, including concerts in the locality, masterclasses and workshops. Many pupils become involved in musical activities outside school, and the regular tours abroad are especially popular. Much of the success of the department is a tribute to the excellent commitment and enthusiasm of the senior pupils, including many ex-choristers, and staff who generate a happy and purposeful atmosphere.

Physical Education (PE) and Games

- 8.72 Pupils achieve good standards in PE and games. Pupils' attainment at A level is good in relation to their abilities. Results at A level from 2002 to 2004, the last three years for which comparative figures were available, have been well above the national average for maintained schools.
- 8.73 Pupils' attainment in PE is good, both in sixth form examination classes and in weekly PE and games lessons for all age groups. The standards of pupils in Year 8 in both rugby and netball were very good. Skills that are practised in isolation are transferred to the game situation very effectively. A group of Year 9 girls demonstrated refined techniques in lifesaving in the swimming pool. In a Year 12 examination class a review of previous work showed that the pupils had achieved a good understanding of the various concepts underlying their syllabus. Written work is of a good standard.
- 8.74 Progress in both practical and theoretical PE is good. In a Year 7 basketball session pupils evaluated their own performance and progress by comparing their success rate in shooting. Year 10 pupils demonstrated progress over a period of time with improved cardiovascular fitness levels. As pupils progress through the school, they refine their skills in practical lessons, gaining experience and confidence in evaluating their own performance.
- 8.75 The quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour in all years is very good and occasionally excellent. Pupils are well motivated. They concentrate well, want to learn and approach their sport enthusiastically. In all years pupils behave well and work well in practical lessons with due regard for safety. Year 8 games pupils were extremely orderly and well behaved as they made their way to the games fields. Pupils of all ages work effectively in small groups or independently. They have very good relationships with their teachers as was seen in a Year 13 A level lesson where pupils were confident enough to discuss issues and present their opinions. In all lessons pupils are active participants and quite obviously enjoy themselves.
- 8.76 Teaching is good and often very good. It has a strong impact on the progress of the pupils. Very good teacher skill and demonstration in a Year 7 basketball lesson enabled the pupils to follow the example set and refine their shooting skills. A lower ability group in Year 8 rugby were well motivated by the enthusiasm and encouragement of the teacher. A good use of 'scenario setting' in a Year 9 swimming lesson enabled pupils to try out their skills by assessing the situation and choosing appropriate actions. Very skilful questioning and direction by the teacher in a sixth form lesson on concentration theories led to a stimulating discussion about individuals in sport and their preparation for competitions. The department is constantly reviewing its strategies and approaches in order to maximise the potential of the pupils.
- 8.77 Leadership and organisation are good. Departmental documentation takes account of the needs of all pupils, but the department lacks a system of formal assessment and recording to

help monitor the development of all pupils. A very professional and enthusiastic team of staff offer a broad curriculum and an extensive fixture list. The physical education specialists work closely with many of the academic staff who give support to all the games on offer. The sporting facilities of the school are very good. Grass pitches are well maintained and good use is made of the river for rowing. The indoor facilities, including a swimming pool, fitness suite and sports centre, are invaluable: pupils use them extensively during the day and the local community in the evenings. However, the increasing numbers in the school are beginning to put a strain on these resources.

- 8.78 The school has received accreditation from Sport England in the form of their highest award, the Sportsmark Gold, which is awarded for excellence in provision. Physical education and games play an important role in the life of the school, as a result of the dedication and commitment of the staff and the support the department has received from the senior management team. The pupils certainly appreciate the opportunities afforded to them.

Short Subject Reports

Short subject reports contain concise evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and of provision in the school.

Business Studies & Economics

- 8.79 Three lessons were observed, two in business studies and one in economics, all in Year 12. Samples of pupils' work and departmental resources were scrutinised and a discussion held with the head of department.
- 8.80 The quality of teaching observed was good or very good. All the teachers were confident in their use of subject matter. Lessons were well prepared and teachers showed a great deal of enthusiasm for their subject. There was a relaxed yet very respectful relationship between pupils and teachers. Special attention was paid to those pupils, a small minority, who had identified learning difficulties.
- 8.81 The quality of learning was very good. Pupils were very well behaved and showed a great willingness to learn and to be involved in the work of the class. Good use was made of the interactive whiteboard in two of the lessons observed.
- 8.82 The provision for business studies and economics is good and the subjects make a useful and popular contribution to the sixth form curriculum.

Design and Technology

- 8.83 Four lessons, one in each of Years 7 and 12 and two in Year 11, and an after-school activity were observe. A wide range of pupils' work was scrutinised and discussions were held with the head of department.
- 8.84 Teaching was very good. It was based on considerable expertise and was well planned to give a wide variety of experiences in a number of areas. The two part-time technicians contribute significantly to the success of teaching.
- 8.85 Learning, attitudes and behaviour were very good. Pupils were well motivated and responded well in lessons. Pupils used ICT, workshop facilities and tools skilfully. At GCSE and A level an imaginative and demanding range of projects was being tackled with enthusiasm, showing an empathy with materials that resulted in high quality products. Pupils were confident when talking about their designing and making. For example, a knowledgeable and

articulate Year 11 pupil demonstrated how to veneer wood and successfully commanded the full attention of his peers.

- 8.86 The department is bright and stimulating, with displays of a good range of work completed by past and present pupils. It provides an excellent learning environment. It meets health and safety regulations.

Drama

- 8.87 Two lessons were observed, one in Year 10 and one in Year 12. A sample of folders and personal logs was scrutinised and discussions were held with the head of department.
- 8.88 The quality of teaching was good. Good relationships were established with pupils. Pace was usually good and a range of teaching styles and dramatic techniques were well used.
- 8.89 The quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour was sound in opening sessions and good in practical work. Pupils showed interest in the subject and were well motivated. They responded well in warm-up exercises and co-operated fully in practical work. The Year 12 group worked in a focussed and independent way on developing their interpretation of character in their set text.
- 8.90 Accommodation is largely very good. The theatre is an excellent resource and benefits from the services of a full-time theatre manager. Classroom accommodation is suitable, although pupils' changing facilities are inadequate.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

- 8.91 Three lessons were observed, one in each of Years 8, 9 and 13. Examples of pupils' work in files were scrutinised and the computer facilities in the department were seen in use.
- 8.92 The quality of teaching was good and sometimes very good. The subject knowledge of the teachers was very good and they conveyed their interest and enthusiasm to the pupils. Lessons were well prepared, using particularly suitable resources.
- 8.93 The quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour was very good. Pupils contributed well in discussions and focussed quickly when moving on to tasks working at computer terminals.
- 8.94 The department has four dedicated computer rooms with sufficient terminals for class teaching. Suitable software is installed. Three rooms have interactive whiteboards that offer a valuable facility when demonstrating use of software. Equipment is regularly replaced and software updated.

Religious Studies

- 8.95 Three lessons were observed, one each in Years 7, 10 and 12. A discussion was held with the head of department and a selection of pupils' work was scrutinised.
- 8.96 The quality of teaching was very good, showing careful planning and confident delivery. Lessons were conducted at a good pace and high expectations were set. Materials were clearly prepared, concentrating on the central topics of the subject matter and gradually leading the pupils into more difficult and demanding areas.
- 8.97 The quality of pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour was very good. Pupils contributed keenly in lessons, offering their own ideas, whilst respecting the opinions of others. A Year 12 class on the Thomist contingency presented a considerable intellectual challenge to which the pupils responded with confidence and enthusiasm.

- 8.98 The policy for religious studies respects the principles of the school's Anglican foundation but the teaching takes account of those of other faiths or none. A core understanding of Christian beliefs is taught at the outset but pupils are then introduced to other major world religions, as well as to significant moral and spiritual questions. The department has an adequate range of resources and accommodation that are used effectively.

Achievement and Quality in Activities

- 8.99 The range and quality of activities offered by the school are very good. Pupils support the activities very well and a very high proportion participates regularly. Most staff make a significant commitment to the activities programme.
- 8.100 Many pupils of all ages achieve high standards in extra-curricular activities. Significant numbers of pupils take part in a variety of regional and national competitions and their levels of achievement are very good. The mathematics department achieved notable acclaim most recently as finalists in the Team Mathematical Challenge and successes have also been recorded in the Biology Olympiad, where pupils have won gold medals, and in a similar physics activity. Outstanding national successes have frequently been achieved by teams in the annual Newsday competition and in the finals of general knowledge competitions. High numbers gain individual success at each level of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- 8.101 The school is justifiably proud of its wide range of musical activities and its contribution to the musical life of the cathedral. The standard of performance observed was very high. A choristers' rehearsal was particularly enlivening, Year 7 and 8 boys relishing the opportunities to interpret the psalms with accurate intonation and subtleties of phrasing. A lunchtime choir rehearsal involved 60 pupils of all ages and a few staff enjoying singing secular music; their repertoire is varied and challenging. A large group of Year 7 and 8 instrumentalists was heard as a second orchestra. The musical highlight of the inspection week was a concert which featured the best soloists and choirs from the house music competition. The standard of the solo performances was outstanding, with major works being performed from memory to an audience of over 500 pupils and parents. Also notable was the capable accompanying and directing by some senior pupils.
- 8.102 Solo performance opportunities in the school are frequent and the regular Keys Concerts are organised and led by the senior pupils, providing regular conducting and accompanying opportunities. Significant numbers achieve success in the Associated Board, Guildhall and Trinity examinations each term, many gaining distinctions at the higher grades, including performance diplomas. Two current pupils are members of the National Youth Orchestra.
- 8.103 School drama productions are professional in quality and play to large audiences. A visit by an external theatre company one evening during the inspection week was well attended by older pupils. In speech and drama many pupils achieve very good results in examinations. Senior pupils are talented debaters and achieve success in regional and national competitions. Younger pupils are able to participate in a residential Year 7 and 8 creative writing weekend. Pupils also take a very active role in the archive club, which is developing a full record of King's history, a most valuable resource in future years.
- 8.104 Pupils have good opportunities to participate in teams in a wide range of sports and to play in matches against other schools. In recent years rowing has been the sport in which the school is most successful. Not only did the school top the medal board at the most recent elite domestic regatta, but three rowing club members represented Great Britain in international competitions and the King's girls' eight were chosen to represent England in an international, along with a girls' coxless pair. Numerous teams in athletics, basketball, cricket, football, hockey, netball and rugby play against other schools individually and in tournaments with a

good range of success. Fencing, sub-aqua and sailing are popular and well-run activities. The school has county players in a number of sports and individual county champions in athletics. The standard of play, refereeing and degree of parental support in a number of school sporting fixtures observed were all of a high calibre.

- 8.105 The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) is very well supported and it offers pupils a wide range of opportunities to learn about personal leadership, resourcefulness and self-reliance, and to take part in a vibrant programme of activities. During the inspection week a girls' team were presented with medals for winning a regional CCF orienteering competition and one pupil received the gold medal for the best individual performance.
- 8.106 The range of activities is very good and appropriate for all age groups and skill levels. A good balance has been struck between the many different kinds of activity and pupils of all ages are actively engaged. A Year 7 design and technology club worked enthusiastically on a range of projects and the pupils made full, confident and well-supervised use of a range of equipment. The climbing club was also well supervised by staff. On several occasions, for example in an excellent balloon debate, pupils of different ages took part together and worked very co-operatively. The Young Enterprise scheme offers very good opportunities for developing understanding of teamwork and business organisation. Activities are well resourced and the school's base in the Brecon Beacons, the Old Chapel, is used regularly by a range of pupils for a variety of purposes.
- 8.107 Extra-curricular activities contribute very fully to pupils' personal and social development. They have a very significant involvement in community service and charity work of various kinds. Through the charity committee pupils organise a large number of events to raise money for local, national and international charities. The wide range of trips to other countries, such as the classics department's trips to Greece and Italy, modern language exchanges, the annual Year 11 Australian exchange and the drama visit to the USA, contribute directly and valuably to pupils' awareness of other cultures and traditions. A recent Arts Day which incorporated activities from a wide range of ethnic groups was enthusiastically received. The Himalayan club has recorded some significant achievements in the Far East and Africa, and a trip to Peru is currently being planned. Cultural enrichment is also fostered by means of the Russian and Japanese clubs. The school council offers pupils an opportunity to engage directly and responsibly with the running of their school.
- 8.108 The school actively and successfully encourages pupils to take part in activities. An activities' fair at the start of each school year in College Hall effectively promotes awareness of the full range of opportunities, although some younger pupils state that they find this event somewhat overwhelming. The fair is well supported by two brochures which clearly detail the nature, time and location of each activity in an accessible way. Notice boards around the campus are used on a regular basis to good effect.
- 8.109 The majority of staff contributes to the activities programme, their commitment also extending to weekends and holidays on a significant number of occasions. Staff who lead activities are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and hard-working. However, the systems for recording and reporting on pupils' participation and achievement in activities are not used consistently. The activities programme is highly regarded by the pupils and their attendance and punctuality are good.

9. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 9.1 The inspection was carried out from 17 to 21 October 2005. All subjects of the curriculum were inspected and all members of the teaching staff present were observed teaching. However, the size of the team did not permit all subjects to be reported on in full. The following subjects do not have full reports in Section 8: business studies and economics, design and technology, drama, information and communication technology and religious studies. The inspectors visited 151 lessons or parts of lessons, examined extensive samples of work by pupils of different abilities in each year and held formal discussions with these pupils as well as informal discussions with other pupils. They attended 4 assemblies and 25 registration sessions. They observed 18 extra-curricular and sporting activities. They held discussions with 59 teaching and non-teaching staff at various levels in the school. They analysed the 196 responses from parents to a questionnaire distributed in advance of the inspection. They met with representatives of the parents' association and of the governing body. They examined a wide range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Marion Gibbs	Reporting Inspector, formerly HMI, currently Head GSA School
Martin Bates	Head of Department, ISA School
Darrell Farrant	Retired Head, HMC School
John Guyatt	Retired Deputy Head, HMC School
Paul Humberstone	Retired Deputy Head, HMC School
John Kelsall	Retired Head, HMC School
David Knott	Director of Sixth Form, HMC School
John Orr	Senior Tutor, HMC School
Diana Stainbank	Retired Deputy Head, GSA School
David Warwick	Head of Department, HMC School
Andrew Waddington	Head of Department, HMC School