

INSPECTION REPORT

CHATHAM GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Chatham

LEA area: Medway

Unique reference number: 118901

Headteacher: Mr D Gundry

Lead inspector: R C Drew

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 26th September 2003

Inspection number: 259326

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll:	964
School address:	Rainham Road Chatham
Postcode:	ME5 7EH
Telephone number:	(01634) 851262
Fax number:	(01634) 571928
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Colin Fuller
Date of previous inspection:	26 th January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is an 11-18 selective girls school with 964 pupils on roll, including 26 boys in the sixth form. It is set in a relatively disadvantaged urban area from which it draws most of its pupils, though a minority travel from further afield. It selects girls within the top 25 per cent of the local ability range, though this range does not match the national one. As a result, its intake is above average rather than well above. Its pupils vary in social background but on balance, pupils collectively have a degree of social and economic disadvantage. About three-quarters of the pupils are white (British) with the other quarter coming from several ethnic minority backgrounds, mostly of Asian heritage. The school has technology college status, the Artsmark Award and takes pupils who are wheelchair users for the local education authority.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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21785	Veronica Kerr	Team inspector	Mathematics Psychology
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31705	John Mason	Team inspector	Music 11-16
4615	Michael Bostock	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
19404	Caroline Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
4677	Valerie Banks	Team inspector	Geography
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good school** with many very good features and a few weaknesses. It is led and managed well, teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well above average standards and show very positive attitudes to school. The school provides **good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

Strengths

- Achievement by pupils is good overall and the progress made in lessons is very good in history, design and technology and physical education.
- Teaching and learning are good, enabling the pupils, who enter the school at already above-average levels, to reach well above average standards by the time they leave.
- Leadership by the headteacher is good, setting a positive tone and high aspirations. Governance is also good, being suitably supportive yet challenging, and is based on extensive knowledge.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes and behave very well, and their attendance is very good.
- The care, support and guidance given to pupils and students are very good.
- The school's work with the local community is very good.

Weaknesses

- Monitoring of teaching and monitoring of the work of heads of department are unsatisfactory.
- Teaching quality and pupils' achievement are unsatisfactory in geography and Spanish, and in geography, leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- The impact of developments involving literacy, oracy, numeracy, ICT, citizenship and assessment across the curriculum is not yet satisfactory.

Since the previous inspection of 1998, when the school was already judged to be good, **improvement** in the main school has been satisfactory, while in the sixth form it has been very good. The school has acted to raise post-16 attainment and has radically improved facilities in several areas of the school. GCSE standards, however, are currently static and several national initiatives, such as the Key Stage 3 Strategy, have not progressed as far as in schools generally.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils **achieve well** across each stage in school, including the sixth form. They enter Year 7 with above-average attainment levels, but by Year 9, again in Year 11 and at the end of Year 13 they are reaching **well above average standards**.

At the end of Year 9, the 2002 results in National Curriculum tests were amongst the top five per cent in the country in English and well above average in mathematics and science, standards largely confirmed by work seen during the inspection and the unvalidated 2003 results. Standards are well above average in religious education, history and French and above average in all others. The progress made in lessons and long-term achievement across Years 7 to 9 are very good in physical education and history. Achievement is good overall, but only satisfactory in music, geography, modern languages and citizenship.

By the end of Year 11, results are well above average. The 2002 GCSE results showed pupils attaining within the top five per cent of the country in A* to C grades, though not quite as high in terms of points scores. The proportion of A* and A grades is not sufficiently high in some subjects. Work seen was well above average in English, mathematics, science, art, history, and design and technology. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is very good in English, physical education, design and technology, and history, but unsatisfactory in modern languages and geography.

At the end of Year 13, results in 2002, and the unvalidated results for 2003, confirm that students now reach well above average standards and achieve well in the sixth form. This welcome improvement reflects wise changes to broaden the curriculum and upgrade the quality of monitoring and support of students' progress. Current achievement in lessons is good or very good in virtually all subjects.

*Pupils' personal qualities are an asset to the school, with **very positive attitudes and equally high quality behaviour** being the norm. Attendance and punctuality to lessons are both very good. The school provides very clear moral and social guidance and provides good opportunities for spiritual and cultural development.*

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **overall quality** of education provided is **good**, because the school offers a well-designed curriculum and **good teaching**. The range of informal activities to enrich the curriculum is very good.

Teaching benefits from teachers' very secure knowledge of their subject and of the examination boards' requirements. Very good relationships with pupils are typical and the positive attitudes and very good behaviour lead to effective learning. Some teachers, especially in history and in many aspects of design and technology and post-16 psychology, are particularly adept at encouraging the extensive involvement of pupils. The strong pace and high expectations seen generally are less well developed in geography and modern foreign language teaching.

Pupils' ability to learn effectively and make good progress over time also benefits from the wider range of courses now offered. High-quality pastoral and academic guidance ensures good attendance and a willingness amongst pupils to seek help. With strong parental support, pupils know the high premium attached to hard work and good progress. Good links with primary schools facilitate learning across Years 6 to 7. However, book-based independent research in the library is underdeveloped.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher leads well and financial and administrative matters are very efficiently handled. Leadership by other key staff is sound and governance is good.

The headteacher, with strong governing body support, has promoted crucial changes to the curriculum, facilities and monitoring arrangements in the sixth form, significantly improving standards. The initiative of individuals, as in PHSE, is enhanced by good management from the headteacher. Senior management now carries out more monitoring, but a few areas of teaching or departmental management have remained unsatisfactory for too long and more decisive action is required. Governors have good knowledge of the school and meet most of their statutory duties. Several other areas, such as the sixth form, the pastoral system, history, physical education, biology, health and social care, and psychology are very successfully managed.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' questionnaires showed great support for the school. Parents particularly applaud teaching, good behaviour and the support their children receive. Pupils say they are very happy. Inspectors' evidence confirms these views as being well-deserved.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Monitor teaching more extensively, using senior and middle managers, with clear targets and deadlines for improvement where necessary.
- Apply particularly clear support and monitoring to geography and modern foreign languages to ensure that pupils' achievement quickly reaches a satisfactory standard.
- Take steps to spread existing good practice on literacy, oracy, numeracy, ICT, citizenship and assessment to all departments, ensuring more reliable assessment of the needs of gifted and talented pupils.
- Modify the pattern of very long and widely spaced teaching periods so that the majority of subjects can provide better continuity of learning for pupils.
- Update and enlarge the limited library stock, especially texts for sixth form independent research.
- Raise good achievement and good provision to very good levels by ensuring that all subjects employ the successful strategies used by the highest-achieving sixth-form areas;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that the governors' reports to parents include national test and examination results for comparison with the school's results;
- Extend the time allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11 so that the Locally Agreed Syllabus can be fully taught.

THE SIXTH FORM AT CHATHAM GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

There are 247 sixth formers. Most are girls from the main school, but a few girls and boys transfer from other schools. There are 27 courses and an enhancement programme.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form's effectiveness is very good. It is very well led and managed and has good overall teaching and learning. Standards are well above average and students achieve well in relation to their capabilities, a significant recent improvement. Spending is average and the sixth form is very cost-effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

Strengths

- The head of sixth form leads very well, setting high expectations of students and colleagues.
- Students achieve well overall and very well in some subjects. Their attitudes are very good.
- There is good overall teaching, with much that is very good.
- The curriculum is particularly varied and well matched to students' needs.
- Teaching and attainment are particularly successful in biology, history, media studies, psychology, health and social care and government and politics.

Weaknesses

- Students achieve less well in music, art and sports studies than in the sixth form as a whole.
- While the library is well used, its book stock is limited and contains too many outdated texts.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

In addition to those itemised below inspectors sampled the work of health and social care, classics, theatre studies, media studies, government and politics, critical thinking and music technology. Standards were all above average and in many instances well above average.

Curriculum areas	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	English literature: overall provision is good . Teaching and learning are good and the subject is well managed. French: overall provision is satisfactory . Teaching is good and students make good progress in lessons. There is largely new, sound leadership and management, with a need now for continuity.
Mathematics	Mathematics: provision is good . Teaching and learning are good and the subject is well led.
Science	Chemistry: Provision is good . Sampling of the other sciences showed very good provision in biology and good provision in physics. Psychology: provision is very good . Teaching is very effective and the subject is very well organised.
Information and communication technology	ICT (AVCE): Overall provision is good , with effective teaching and learning and good leadership.
Humanities	History: provision is very good due to very effective leadership and very good teaching. In addition, geography was sampled and found to be good. Results are above average and students make good progress. Leadership is satisfactory.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Design and technology (product design): Provision is good . Teaching and learning are good and results well above average. The subject is well led and managed.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art: provision is satisfactory . Teaching and learning are satisfactory and achievement sound. Leadership and management are secure, but more improvement could have been made since last inspection. Provision in media studies was sampled and found to be very good with very effective teaching and well above average standards.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Sports Studies: overall provision is satisfactory . Teaching and learning and the management of the subject are sound. There is a need to revise the way the course is adapted to students' needs.
Business	Business A level: good overall provision. Teaching and leadership are both good and the students reach above-average standards.
Health and social care	Sampled
General education	Sampled

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students are given very good support and guidance and their views are sought regularly. Particular strengths include work experience, careers education and one-to-one confidential counselling when requested. Equally valuable as preparation for life beyond school is the way students take on a wide range of jobs and co-opt others to help in administrative work, as class helpers in the lower school and primary schools and in areas such as sport and environmental projects.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The **leadership and management** of the sixth form are **very good**. The head of sixth form, supported by the headteacher, has introduced a range of important changes that have established a far more appropriate curriculum and much closer monitoring and support of students' progress. Sixth form tutors work closely with the head of sixth, ensuring highly consistent demands and support, leading directly to higher expectations and a sense of purpose, far higher retention rates, better progress and significantly higher overall standards. In addition, governors and senior managers have provided better accommodation, these very good facilities enhancing learning, particularly in independent study and in developing a strong sixth-form identity.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students express extremely positive views about the sixth form and consider that they are helped to make wise course choices and settle in quickly. They rate the work of their teachers very highly and find careers advice most helpful. They consider that the school strikes exactly the right balance between giving them freedom and providing guidance and defining limits.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

For the school as a whole, standards are well above average, and pupils and students are making good progress – that is, they are achieving well in relation to their capabilities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- There is good collective achievement, or long-term progress, from Years 7 to 11.
- There is very good achievement in history across Years 7 to 11 and in physical education in Years 7 to 9.
- At the end of Year 9 and Year 11, the standards seen during the inspection were well above national averages in mathematics, science, history, religious education and French.
- In the 2002 GCSE results, pupils generally gained their best results in biology, design and technology, physical education, German, mathematics, physics and religious education.

Weaknesses

- Current achievement is unsatisfactory in geography and Spanish across Years 7 to 11.
- Higher-attaining pupils do not always achieve in line with their capabilities.
- In the 2002 GCSE results, pupils generally gained their lowest grades in drama, English, geography and history.

Commentary

1. The standards reached by pupils in work seen during the inspection and in test and examination results are well above national averages. These standards are not attained simply because in this selective school pupils enter Year 7 with a head start over other pupils. Their results at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 indicate that they make good overall progress in lessons and acquire more knowledge and skills than might be expected simply by maturing. Results are at least as good as, and in some respects better than those found in schools with a similar intake.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	39.9 (40.1)	33.3 (33.0)
Mathematics	43.2 (42.3)	34.7 (34.4)
Science	39.1 (39.8)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 146 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Essentially, these favourable outcomes reflect good teaching and very positive attitudes from pupils. This enabled pupils in many subjects to demonstrate well above average standards in Year 11 during the inspection. Results at GCSE in recent years confirm that these high levels of attainment are usual for most of these subjects, though history had disappointing results in 2002 but showed much higher quality work amongst current Year 11 pupils during the inspection.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	96 (97)	50 (48)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	56.4 (58.1)	39.8 (39.0)

There were 127 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Where teaching and attitudes are especially strong, achievement is very good. In history across Years 7 to 11, and in physical education in Years 7 to 9, pupils make very marked gains. Teaching is particularly well focused, showing a clear understanding of the needs of different pupils and how these are to be met in each lesson. Leadership in these subjects is very good and succeeds in alerting all staff to an agreed approach to building challenge and pace into lessons and ensuring that the departments' schemes of work are imaginative, up-to-date and require progressively more demanding work from pupils.
3. While pupils' standards are better than the national averages in geography and modern languages, they are not achieving as well as they should in these subjects particularly in Years 10 and 11. In modern foreign languages, Spanish has more shortcomings than French and German. Progress in lessons is variable and, on balance, unsatisfactory. Crucially, leadership and management are not secure here. In geography, leadership and management are unsatisfactory and fail to ensure that there are high enough expectations of pupils in lessons and that there is a sufficiently rigorous programme of teaching and assessment. In modern foreign languages, there is good, but very new, management, which has inherited management systems with shortcomings. Higher-attaining pupils make good progress by virtue of good overall teaching quality and their own very strong commitment. However, in many subjects, there is scope for more specific provision for the needs of these pupils.
4. The small number of pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall. They achieve well in many areas: for example, some gain above-average scores in national tests at the end of Year 9. The very small number with statements make good progress towards the targets set at their annual reviews and show increasing attainment and effort scores in their regular tests in class. Pupils also make good progress towards targets set in their individual educational programmes, which are very thoroughly and regularly reviewed.
5. The 15 pupils with English as an additional language reach the standards expected in the light of their previous attainment and make progress as rapidly as others in their group. The special educational needs co-ordinator checks on their standards and progress as they move through the school. She has ascertained that no student is underachieving because of an inadequate knowledge of English, even as an advanced learner.

Sixth form

Standards are well above average compared with all schools, and students achieve well, making good overall progress in relation to their capabilities. Boys attain less well than girls, but by a smaller margin than nationally. Several subjects help students to reach particularly high standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- The overall attainment of students is now well above average, having strongly improved in the last five years.
- Progress in lessons and longer-term achievement is good.
- Of the subjects focused upon during the inspection, standards in history, psychology, information and communication technology (ICT) and chemistry were well above average.
- Recent examination results in Year 13 have been especially high in biology, media studies, mathematics and health and social care.

Weaknesses

- Of the subjects focused upon during the inspection, standards are not as high as they should be in French, music, art and sports studies.
- Recent examination results are below average in drama, design and technology and religious studies.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	100.0 (100.0)	95.9 (95.0)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	45.6	42.2
Average point score per pupil	297.6	237.5

There were 90 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- Standards in the sixth form are well above average and far higher than five years ago because they have benefited from a range of curricular and monitoring changes and better facilities. Students' points scores, using well-established calculation methods, have risen from 14.5 (below the average for all schools) in 1998 to 19.9 in 2002, while the national average moved from 16.0 to 18.0. This rise reflects good teaching and also the well-organised monitoring of progress introduced by the head of sixth form. Students are very clear about the likely and the most optimistic expectations that they should work to; above all they are aware of how to improve. In addition, the more varied curriculum and vastly better facilities have led to dramatic improvements in staying on rates, so that virtually all students who start a course find they like it and complete the course.
- In the subjects with well above average standards the common factors are distinctively good teaching and imaginative and very effective leadership and management. Standards are lower than the schools' general levels in several areas. In music, art and modern foreign languages teaching and monitoring of students' progress is not as effective as elsewhere in the sixth form, while sport studies, drama, design and technology and religious studies results reflect problems in relating new or demanding courses to students. In addition, in modern foreign languages the discontinuity in staffing experienced by the department has affected results and remains a key challenge for the new head of department.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance is **very good**. Attitudes and behaviour, including the incidence of exclusions, are **very good**. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Attendance is well above the national average.
- Pupils consistently demonstrate very good attitudes to all aspects of school life, and behave very well, in line with the school's high expectations of them.

- Pupils raise large sums of money for a wide variety of charities.
- Very high levels of enthusiasm are shown for the clubs and trips that are provided.
- Pupils enjoy school.

Weaknesses

- Not all subject areas plan sufficient opportunities to increase pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.3	School data	0.1
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	725	13	0
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	20	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	7	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	12	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	35	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	14	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	0	0
Black or Black British – African	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	122	0	0

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

Commentary

- Attendance is carefully monitored and the school and parents work well to ensure that pupils do not miss school through absence. Generally, pupils arrive on time for lessons and at the start of the school day.
- Pupils in all year groups are very positive about the opportunities provided and enjoy their lessons and the range of outside activities. Nearly all pupils said that this is a good school to

attend. They are keen to learn and to do well. The school community is free from racial abuse, and the few instances of bullying that are reported are dealt with well. Relationships throughout the school are very good.

4. The behaviour of all groups of pupils, regardless of age or ability, is very good, although, exceptionally, in a lesson where the teacher had low expectations of what pupils should achieve, they exhibited some unruly behaviour.
5. Pupils' development of spiritual awareness is good, but this is not planned into lessons as often as it could be. Religious education makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development; pupils show very positive attitudes to learning about themselves and about life from their study of religions. Some assemblies contribute to pupils' development; an excellent assembly planned and led by a Year 9 tutor group to celebrate the Jewish New Year captivated both performers and audience. The information about another faith and culture was clearly explained through readings and role play, and other pupils showed their appreciation by giving their full attention to the presentation and maintained absolute silence when candles were lit. Most assemblies give too little time for pupils to reflect on the theme, often moral or social, and tutor times are rarely used to introduce a topic for reflection. The school does not meet its statutory duty to provide a daily act of collective worship.
6. History lessons also make a very strong contribution to personal development, with many planned opportunities to explore moral, social and cultural issues, including studies of the Holocaust, and civil rights in America, and changes in social and cultural traditions. Pupils of all ages expressed opinions on these topics, which enabled them to develop self-awareness. However, many other lessons do not plan for personal development in line with the school's very good policy, and explicit reference is often overlooked. In art, pupils have too little opportunity to study works of art, for example by visiting galleries, and in music there is scope for more practical work in the study of music from around the world.
7. Not all tutors place sufficient value on their role in promoting pupils' personal development. Time is wasted in form times, and occasionally in personal, social and health education lessons, when pupils are given no help or direction, for example in planning an assembly. Most tutors adhere well to the good programme for personal and social education and these lessons contribute well to moral and social understanding, so that pupils develop ethical principles and understand the meaning of belonging to a community. The work done in raising money to help charities is outstanding, so that pupils understand the plight of those whom they are helping and are happy to give their own time to raise funds through rag week activities and other events.
8. Since the last inspection, pupils have sustained high standards of behaviour, positive attitudes to work and a willingness to be involved in the school and wider community.

The sixth form

Students' attendance and punctuality are **very good**. Attitudes and behaviour in the sixth form are **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Students play a full part in the life of the main school and the wider community.
- Students display consistently very good, and often excellent attitudes to learning.
- There is very good attendance.

Weaknesses

None

Commentary

2. Students are keen to participate in the many opportunities offered. They lead whole-school events such as the annual rag week, and run clubs and societies. Many are involved in an active citizen scheme, with work placements in the community.
3. Students take their studies seriously and respond to challenge very well. Students' relationships with staff and their peers are excellent, which results in worthwhile discussion and co-operative learning. In an excellent lesson on media representation of death and dying, students showed an exceptional understanding of the issues of death giving meaning to life.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The **quality of education** provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning and the formal curriculum are all good, and the extra-curricular opportunities for pupils are very good. The accommodation and resource levels are great assets in parts of the school but significantly hamper the curriculum elsewhere.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- The curricular opportunities are good.

Weaknesses

- Accommodation and resources inhibit the curriculum in ICT, physical education and art and design.
- Assessment is used satisfactorily overall, but there is inconsistency between departments.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning for the school as a whole is good. Teaching overall is effective in helping pupils to progress well, and the pupils' own attitudes and learning skills assist the process. All groups of pupils achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are consistent across the school, being good in Years 7 to 9, Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.
- In Years 7 to 9, very good quality teaching and learning have produced work of well above average standards in French and history.
- In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are very good in design and technology, history, religious education and English.

Weaknesses

- In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are currently unsatisfactory in geography and modern foreign languages.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
15 (7.8)	54 (26.2)	79 (38.4)	49 (23.8)	9 (4.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)

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

2. Teachers across the school have a very good command of their subjects, and pupils both respect and benefit from this. Staff are also more consistent than in many schools in sustaining very good relationships with pupils. Coupled with the pupils' own very positive attitudes to school, this ensures that the great majority of lessons proceed productively, with clear, well-organised teaching and good progress being made by pupils.

3. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good. Support assistants provide an appropriate level of help and encouragement and their relationships with pupils are good. Teaching strengths are found in lessons where a good variety of teaching methods are used and which proceed at a good pace. Relationships between teachers and pupils are also good, and purposeful, and this helps to maintain good concentration and engagement. For example, in an English lesson, pupils worked in pairs and in small groups, read individually and aloud and worked on practical tasks. The lesson was moved on purposefully at well-judged intervals and the pace was brisk. These factors produced good learning.

4. In some subjects, recent or current teaching has additional features that raise the quality to very good. In history lessons in Years 7 to 9, for example, particularly strong attention is nearly always given to involving pupils as much as possible and ensuring that the work they do is varied to match their particular needs. This attention to pupils' needs is possible because assessment data about them is well known and carefully used. Literacy and numeracy skills are regularly reinforced. Pupils' work in French for the same year groups shows that similar strategies are used to achieve very good teacher assessments in 2002. In Years 10 and 11, there are equally successful teaching approaches in religious education, design and technology, and English. The analysis of pupils' prior attainment and capabilities is good and teachers consistently establish strong pace in lessons, through varying the focus of the lessons at frequent intervals. Again, pupils are rarely allowed to be passive recipients of information, but are actively involved in investigative work or answering questions that allow them to demonstrate what they know. The current teaching and learning in history, design and technology and religious education benefits noticeably from leadership and management that is good or very good. Consistent strength in teaching reflects agreed approaches and clear leadership on the introduction of teaching strategies.

5. In geography and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are currently unsatisfactory, and, as a result, pupils' achievement across these years is unsatisfactory. In modern foreign languages, the newly-appointed head of department has not had time to establish consistency of practice. Many lessons have good teaching and in some it is very good; however, too many other lessons have unsatisfactory teaching. There is variation between French, German and Spanish teaching and between individuals. The department has recently suffered serious discontinuity in staffing. In geography, the leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory, and this underlies the limited consistency within teaching and the lack of agreed strategies for ensuring extensive pupil involvement in lessons; there is insufficient variety of task to sustain high pace and weak use of assessment data to pitch lessons.

Sixth form

Teaching is good overall. It was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons, and 40 per cent of lessons had very good or excellent teaching. Learning was of similar good quality.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Of the subjects focused on during the inspection, teaching was very good in history, psychology, and chemistry.
- There was very good teaching and learning in other subjects, notably biology, drama, classics, theatre studies, media studies, and government and politics.
- Teaching in general in the sixth form benefits from very good subject expertise and very high expectations.
- Learning across the sixth form is characterised by very impressive attitudes which lead to good progress in lessons.

Weaknesses

- While satisfactory by national standards, teaching and learning are not so strong in art, music and physical education as elsewhere in the school.
2. Teaching in history and psychology illustrates many positive features of sixth form practice. In both subjects, teachers build on very strong expertise in the subject, and there is regular reference in lessons and outside lessons to the targets expected of students and their current rates of progress. Teaching is closely adapted to challenge or support students in their learning. Learning is very good in both subjects because of the very high level of responsibility given to students to participate actively, research independently. Many other subjects not formally focused upon in the inspection show signs of equally effective teaching, often for similar reasons. However, teaching in media studies demonstrates that strongly teacher-led lessons can also communicate very successfully to students, inspire them and ensure they know how to study independently. Biology and health and social care teaching both illustrate the value of carefully managed one-to-one reviewing of students' progress.
 3. In all subjects, the very positive attitudes of students are a major help to learning and longer-term achievement. Attendance levels are much higher than in sixth forms generally. Students concentrate well in lessons and make very good use of private study facilities. They are quick to use and appreciate the many forms of extra help offered to them by teachers
 4. In some subjects, teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good. In sports studies, there is a need to interpret syllabus requirements and students' needs more effectively. In art and music, there is insufficient rigorous use of assessment to set challenging expectations and to raise students' awareness of what to do to improve.

The curriculum

Overall, the curriculum is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- The curriculum is broad and well-balanced.
- Extra-curricular provision is a strength of the school.
- Careers education is well-developed.
- Provision for personal, social and health education has improved since the last inspection.

Weaknesses

- Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met.
- Accommodation constrains aspects of the curriculum especially in sport and drama.

Commentary

2. The school offers a full range of courses for pupils across all years. The curriculum provides broad opportunities for study across National Curriculum subjects. The curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The great majority are educated with their peers all the time and have full access to the school's curriculum. Where necessary, adaptations are made to meet to individual needs, for example to ensure that there are proper levels of specialist outside provision, such as speech and language therapy or physiotherapy. The school has not had to make general provision for pupils with English as an additional language because such pupils are well integrated into all the subjects and groups of their choice. Equality of opportunity is excellent. The school offers additional opportunities, including a music technology course, the possibility of taking Punjabi and Turkish GCSE examinations outside school and supporting, through an Educational Trust link, some Japanese children who join the school each year. These children go to lessons but have some additional withdrawal lessons paid for by the Trust.
3. In languages, all pupils study French in Years 7 to 9, together with German or Spanish in Years 8 and 9. All pupils also study Latin in Year 7 and thereafter as an option. Lessons are 75 minutes in length. Lessons of this length are appropriate for practical subjects, but less so for subjects such as mathematics and modern languages, where shorter, more frequent inputs are generally acknowledged to be a better format for learning.
4. There are shortcomings in the curriculum. It does not meet requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship. In Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, the time provided for the study of religious education is significantly less than that specified by the agreed syllabus although the quality of provision is very good. Specialist ICT teaching is expanding but in Year 9 and for some pupils in Year 8 ICT teaching is carried out by other subjects and the standard is too variable. This is partly because access to ICT facilities has not quite reached acceptable levels despite the substantial progress made since the last inspection. Numeracy and literacy are not strongly promoted across the curriculum.
5. As a Technology College, the school offers opportunities for study in ICT, graphics, resistant materials, textiles and food. A purpose-designed technology building offers modern, attractive and spacious facilities. A short course GCSE in ICT is provided for the majority of pupils.
6. Library accommodation is good but much of the book stock is outdated. Good ICT facilities are available in the library and these are well used. Unsatisfactory accommodation constrains the curriculum in several areas. Indoor sports are hindered by an undersized gymnasium, but field sports are better served, with facilities for football, hockey, netball and athletics. Music rooms, while new and in good decorative order are small, poorly-ventilated and lack effective soundproofing. There is no proper studio provision for drama. Some rooms used for the teaching of modern foreign languages have poor acoustics, due to a lack of carpeting. Accommodation for art and design is shabby and there is no designated space for independent study of art in the sixth form. Rooms used to teach business studies are also small and the lack of blinds restricts use of audio-visual material.
7. Provision for personal, social and health education has improved since the last inspection. There is a comprehensive scheme of work for all year groups and the overall programme is well planned and monitored. The personal, social and health education programme covers careers, health, sex education and drugs awareness. Good use is made of school visitors.
8. The school has a small number of pupils with special educational needs and provides well for them. It offers good access to classes for pupils who use a wheelchair. Pupils with statements of educational needs receive effective in-class support.
9. Careers education is well developed. Careers advisers visit the school and there are evening careers seminars, led by speakers from industry, higher education, medicine etc. There is a

well-resourced careers library. Careers guidance software is effective in supporting the subject. Pupils have opportunities for work experience in Years 10 and 12.

10. Extra-curricular provision is a strength of the school. There is a wide range of opportunities to extend studies through sports activities, drama, music and science. Clubs include robot construction, which has won awards in a Kent competition. There are field studies in geography, exchange visits in languages, and day trips to enhance studies in English, history, geography, biology, physics and chemistry. The school has reached national finals in an environmental project. Concerts and productions, public speaking events and mock trials offer further scope to extend pupils' talents. A summer school provides extra activities for gifted and talented pupils.
11. Curricular resources are adequate overall, although there is demand for more computers. Additional resources have been made available to support the implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy.

Sixth form

12. Sixth form provision has developed over time to include a good balance of academic and vocational programmes of study. ICT and health and social care are offered as Advanced Vocational subjects, and there is a BTEC National Diploma course in performing arts. Music technology, theatre studies and media studies provide complementary creative options. Critical thinking and psychology provide additional choice in a broad and modern curriculum.
13. There is a well-developed careers programme in the sixth form, with good links with Canterbury University. Excellent personal, social and health education lessons for Year 13 were provided during the inspection.

Accommodation

Main school

14. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall, despite tremendous improvements since the last inspection. Pupils in science and ICT have benefited from the new buildings. Facilities for pupils with disabilities are good. Present accommodation particularly limits the curriculum in the following ways: poor indoor and outdoor facilities for physical education; insufficient suiting in mathematics and art, impacting on teaching methods and making the co-ordination of teaching and learning difficult; insufficient areas for teaching designated ICT and ICT in other subjects; and some English and music classrooms are too small for class sizes.

Sixth form

15. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. While the new buildings offer a stimulating and pleasant learning environment, some subjects, such as mathematics, drama and psychology, are inadequately accommodated. Mathematics is taught in many classrooms distant from its main base, and drama lacks sufficient studio provision. Art has no designated space for private study and this affects students' achievement. Music rooms are too small, poorly soundproofed and badly ventilated. Poor indoor and outdoor facilities for physical education severely restrict the curriculum.

Resources

Main school

16. The provision for resources is unsatisfactory overall. While there are enough resources in most subjects, good resources in science and excellent technical resources in music, there

are shortages in several important areas. In French and English in Years 10 and 11, there are too few textbooks to support the work adequately. Resources are unsatisfactory in mathematics and art, and there are not enough computers for teaching ICT in other subjects. These deficiencies limit practical work and constrain teaching methods.

17. While library provision has improved, some stock is still outdated. The library is not used enough by departments to encourage research and independent learning across Years 7 to 11. It provides well-used ICT research and private study facilities for sixth form students but offers them too limited a range of reference books.

Sixth form

18. The provision for resources is satisfactory overall and good in science, English, music and ICT. Shortages in mathematics, drama and psychology limit the scope of activities.

Care, guidance and support

The procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. Support, advice and guidance for pupils, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development, are **very good**. The extent to which the school seeks to involve pupils in its work and development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- There is very good emphasis on safe working practices and safe conduct.
- Support for gifted and talented pupils is good.
- There are very good induction arrangements for pupils new to the school.
- An effective personal, social and health education programme is provided.
- Procedures to support all groups of pupils are very effective.
- Pupils are fully involved in the life and development of the school.

Weaknesses

- Not all tutors attach sufficient importance to the personal and social development of those in their group.
- Some groups of pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive limited careers guidance

Commentary

2. The school's policies for child protection and health and safety are very effective, and pupils work in a well-supported learning environment. Transition arrangements for pupils joining in Year 7 are thorough and enable pupils to settle into their new school very quickly. Summer schools support gifted and talented boys and girls from several primary schools.
3. All pupils' academic progress is monitored throughout their school career, and personal achievements and performance very carefully recorded. Tutors and senior staff are able to give informed advice and to deal with under-achievement or personal problems promptly. Key Stage leaders are particularly diligent in this area. Good achievement, very good behaviour and high levels of attendance result.
4. Most teachers use tutorial time well. A few, however, make limited use of this opportunity to further encourage pupils' personal development, and time is sometimes wasted during form periods on days when there is no assembly, and occasionally during personal, social and health education lessons taught by form tutors. Pupils who take ten GCSE subjects have a restricted provision of careers advice and guidance.

5. Pupils feel that their views about the school are valued. They participate in a school council, in which all forms are represented, and report that this enables little things to be done, such as the provision of left-handed scissors and improvements in the homework diaries.
6. Since the last inspection, the procedures to ensure child protection have been tightened up and significant improvements have been made to the provision of personal, social and health education, both in dedicated lessons and with the introduction of citizenship in Year 7.

The sixth form

The support, advice and guidance available in the sixth form are **very good**. Students' views are valued and they have **very good** involvement in the life of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Students receive very good, well-informed support and advice.
- Students receive very good guidance on study and career opportunities.
- Students take the lead in many of the school's charitable activities.

Weaknesses

None

Commentary

47. Sixth form students strongly appreciate the advice given to them, and feel they are studying appropriate courses that they enjoy. Those who join from other schools find it very easy to settle in. Students are instrumental in organising some of the clubs and activities in the main school and have a full involvement in the development of the school community.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is **good**. The quality of links with the local community is **good**. Extended educational programmes for the community are **very good**. The school's links with other schools and colleges are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- The school provides extensive and high-quality support in ICT for the community.
- The school has developed good links with businesses, colleges and universities.
- There are practical links with primary schools.
- Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress.
- The parents' association has been rejuvenated.

Weaknesses

- Curricular links with junior schools are under-developed.
- Information about the school is not as detailed or up-to-date as it should be.

Commentary

48. Parents are well informed about their children's progress through annual and interim profiles, which report on attainment and effort in all subjects studied and suggest strategies for improvement. Parents attend review meetings and consultation evenings, and communication

is sustained through regular use of pupils' planners. Attendance at concerts and performances is very good and parents support other school activities by assisting with transport or through the fundraising events organised by the parents' association. Parents do not receive all the information that they should in the governors' annual report, nor in the prospectus.

49. Pastoral links to ensure that pupils experience a smooth transfer from primary to secondary school are very good, and primaries receive substantial help with ICT, but curricular links in other areas are patchy.
50. Courses in ICT have been provided free of charge to several hundred primary school teachers, as well as to elderly and unemployed members of the wider community. The school is now participating in a broader-based project with Medway Education Development and Business Support, which brings the spectrum of educational institutions and business interests together for mutual benefit. Links with higher education and business have enabled a number of students to participate in 'Robot Wars', learning engineering skills in a fun environment.
51. Since the last inspection, good links have been maintained with schools, colleges and the community. An impressive programme of community education has been put in place.

The sixth form

Links with the community and other schools and colleges are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- The school has good links with local universities.
- The active citizen scheme involves students in the community.
- Transfer arrangements for students from other schools are good.

Weaknesses

None

Commentary

48. Students' career advice and guidance are very well supported by the links established with local universities, especially those with Greenwich, and Kent and Christchurch University College at Canterbury. Visitors from these establishments provide informed talks on aspects of higher education, and students are able to observe university life at first-hand.
49. Students in Year 12 benefit from community placements in neighbouring schools, homes for the elderly and commercial institutions, and are helped to organise placements to develop their knowledge of the workplace.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management in the school are good. The headteacher leads well, there are good administrative systems and the governing body is well informed and gives the school good support.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- The headteacher has established and sustained a very good ethos in the school and has encouraged many staff to bring in beneficial changes to school practice.
- Financial and administrative matters are managed very efficiently.

- The governing body has better first-hand knowledge of its school than usual and provides good strategic guidance and support.
- Leadership and management in many specific areas are very good, notably in the running of the sixth form, history, physical education and the work of heads of key stage.
- The headteacher and governors have gained significant improvements in accommodation and resource levels for the school.

Weaknesses

- Whilst improving, the impact of lesson observations and monitoring the work of heads of department is not yet satisfactory.
- Leadership and management of geography are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

48. A key feature of the school is the secure and purposeful atmosphere that prevails. The headteacher contributes significantly by establishing a clear sense of purpose through well-defined educational and social aims, which he demonstrates in his own practice. Staff and pupils find him approachable and keen to encourage their initiatives. The headteacher plays a key role in promoting the very good relationships that exist between staff and pupils. These owe much to the prominence given to collaborative ventures such as the school officials system and “rag week” and the consistent success with which staff balance the need for independent development of pupils and students with the equally important need for clear guidance.
49. There is strong financial management and very efficient administration in the school. Both areas involve capable individuals being delegated important responsibilities which are carefully monitored. There are far tighter auditing and monitoring systems applied to the school’s finances than usual, involving good co-operation between the bursar, the headteacher and the governors’ finance sub-committee. The governing body’s wider work is performed well because many individual governors are often on site and have good first-hand knowledge of the school, and because the supply of reports to governors is good and their meetings frequent and well managed. Collectively, the governors and senior managers have successfully bid for considerable additional funds to enable great improvements in accommodation and resources for most sixth form areas, dining facilities, the library and many teaching rooms.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,075,074
Total expenditure	3,084,236
Expenditure per pupil	3,173

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	49,160
Balance carried forward to the next	27,085

48. In several areas of middle management, responsibilities are carried out very effectively. In history and physical education, both leadership and management are very good. There is a constant desire to improve and the heads of department have the skills to make this happen. Many recent initiatives are particularly well developed in these departments, such as reinforcing high-level literacy and oracy skills on a regular basis and using assessment data to plan carefully for the varied needs of pupils, including the gifted and talented. Monitoring colleagues’ teaching is also more systematic and effective than usual.
49. Leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are good. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs are thorough, and the individual educational programmes are well written and thoroughly reviewed. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Levels of involvement in annual reviews for pupils with statements of special educational needs are good, and the views of parents, outside agencies and the pupils themselves are clearly represented. The new Code of Practice is in place and its principles and procedures are well understood. The school has made good

progress in meeting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2001, installing lifts and ramps, although a small number of problems remain. However, there is not enough focused monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that provision continues to improve or to ensure that pupils make continued good progress in subjects and lessons.

50. While most aspects of senior management have helped the school forward at a good pace, monitoring has lacked rigour in some areas. Teaching has not incorporated some national initiatives as effectively as it might, even though some departments have shown how these can be implemented and bring benefits. Monitoring of teaching has not applied sufficient rigour to ensuring consistent practice in literacy, numeracy, the teaching of PHSE and provision for gifted and talented pupils. Similarly, while most subjects are well led, monitoring by senior managers has not always led to new targets and deadlines for improvement being set where subjects are less well run.
51. Geography currently has unsatisfactory leadership and management. More rigorous monitoring by senior managers is required but at head of department level, better strategies are needed for consistency in the pace and structure of lessons and for the successful use of assessment data to guide expectations and planning.

Staffing

52. The last inspection reported that there was little evidence that staff development was making an impact on pupils' progress and attainment. Since then, procedures have been strengthened and monitoring systems put in place. However, these are not applied with sufficient consistency. Outside the framework for performance management and obligations to new staff and trainees, there is little monitoring of teaching by heads of department and no formal system for ensuring that it is done. Heads of department are 'encouraged' to undertake a programme of classroom observations, but not all do so.
53. The school has good procedures for inducting newly-qualified teachers. The well thought out induction programme is mainly directed at newly-qualified teachers but is also open to student teachers and to qualified staff who are new to the school. The main responsibility for ensuring that the latter become familiar with school procedures rests with heads of subject areas.
54. Arrangements for the continuing professional development of staff are satisfactory. Performance management reviews are used to identify training requirements, and individual members of staff work with the professional development co-ordinator to match needs with appropriate action. This system has been successful in developing the subject knowledge and classroom expertise of some teachers but the application of the policy has been uneven. The school has supported long-term staff development and a number of teachers have gained, or are studying for, higher qualifications. Good contacts with local training institutions enable the school to play a full part in the training of new teachers, and a small number of trainee teachers are engaged on the graduate training programme.
55. The school has a full complement of teachers and this ensures a high percentage of teaching is carried out by well-qualified specialists. Some exceptions exist: non-specialist teaching in media studies, for example, results in a fragmented timetable and detracts from an otherwise very high quality range of provision and the deployment of teachers in modern foreign languages does not use time efficiently. Good improvements have been made in the provision of non-teaching and administrative staff. The appointments of bursar, examinations officer, reprographics technician and additional office staff have enabled teaching staff to concentrate more fully on classroom duties.

Sixth Form

Leadership and management in the sixth form are very good. As a result of initiatives led by the head of the sixth form, encouraged and supported by the headteacher, there has been much improvement. Retention rates, both from Year 11 to Year 12 and from Year 12 to Year 13, have risen dramatically. To a large extent, this increase in numbers is due to the much broader curriculum. There is now effective screening to match students to courses and the broader curriculum is now attractive to a fuller range of students. Good systems are in place to provide a systematic approach to supporting and monitoring students, careful use of assessment data and self-evaluation and the setting of targets. There are regular reviews and the team of deputies and tutors work well and liaise effectively with subject heads. The governors and the head were responsible for a major capital building programme, giving the sixth form excellent facilities. As a result of these factors, results have risen significantly across many subjects.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Attainment in national tests and at GCSE is very good.
- Learning is good as a result of good teaching.
- Pupils are highly motivated and eager to learn.
- Achievement in drama at GCSE is very good.

Weaknesses

- Pupils do less well in English at GCSE than they do in other subjects.
- There are inconsistencies in the use of information about pupils' prior attainment.
- Procedures for monitoring teaching and sharing good practice are not rigorous enough.

Commentary

48. Pupils enter the school with attainment well above the average, in comparison with all schools. Results in the national attainment tests in 2002 for pupils aged 14 were well above the national average for girls, but below average in comparison with those of similar schools. In tests in 2003, these figures were markedly better. The number of pupils gaining grades A* to C in GCSE English in 2002 was very high and the percentage gaining grades in the range A* to G was well above the national average but below average in comparison with similar schools. GCSE results in 2003 were broadly similar. In 2002, results in drama in the GCSE examination were very good but they declined in 2003. Pupils do less well in English than in other subjects but better in drama. These results were reflected in standards of work seen during the inspection.
49. Girls achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and their achievement increases in Years 10 and 11. They are well motivated and keen to learn, and complete work conscientiously at both stages. They write in a variety of styles for different purposes and their writing is accurate and employs a wide range of vocabulary. However, writing by higher-attaining pupils is less lively and inventive than might be expected because, although teaching includes a great deal of vocabulary work and teachers are themselves very good role models, there are too few occasions when the learning of new words is reinforced and consolidated systematically. Drama for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is incorporated into the English timetable but, within the constraints of the present timetable, teachers find it difficult to provide focused speaking and listening activities on a regular basis. As a result, pupils' reticence in speaking, noted at the previous inspection, persists. However, girls who study drama in Years 10 and 11 quickly develop expansive and confident means of expressing themselves. Achievement in drama is very good. Pupils quickly acquire dramatic skills, and their interpretation of characters benefits both from their learning of dramatic devices and the critical skills they develop in English lessons. Girls read well but reading for pleasure declines in popularity throughout Years 8 and 9.
50. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good overall, although the quality varies from excellent to satisfactory. There is greater consistency in the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11, where it is very good in both English and drama. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, plan lessons well and have high expectations of their pupils. They are enthusiastic about their

subject and relationships are very good. A systematic policy for developing the use of ICT provides girls with good opportunities to apply their skills for a variety of purposes. However, in a number of lessons, there were too few opportunities for girls to develop independent thinking and in others, activities were not sufficiently varied. Girls' work is marked regularly, although systems within the department vary; assessment policies are inconsistently applied. More use needs to be made of information about girls' prior attainment for individual diagnosis and target-setting. Assessment in drama is continuous and perceptive and pupils learn well as a result of teachers' skilful analysis of their needs and use of appropriate strategies for their further improvement.

51. The department's systems and day-to-day running are well managed. Relationships and communication are very good, and the department's team of nine full and part-time teachers works together in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Some important aspects of management are not fully satisfactory. Monitoring is not carried out rigorously enough and there are no opportunities for identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching and, in particular, for sharing good practice. The marking system is inconsistently applied. Systems for identifying higher-attaining girls are not sufficiently clear and are not being consistently applied and insufficient use is made of ways of further developing their confidence in speaking. Teachers do not have a clear understanding and acceptance of the use of self-evaluation to raise standards of attainment and reduce anomalies in examination results. The department's accommodation has not improved greatly since the previous inspection. Teachers have to move around a great deal, frequently carrying sets of books or large pieces of equipment into non-specialist rooms. Drama is not well resourced. There is no video camera, although its use is required for the examination, and there are no staging blocks.
52. The department provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including frequent trips to live theatre.
53. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The good standards found at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained. The quality of teaching has improved; there is no unsatisfactory teaching, and a significant amount of excellent teaching. Opportunities have been enhanced by the establishment of the GCSE in drama. Inconsistency still persists in relation to assessment and marking, and girls' speaking and listening abilities need further development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

54. Pupils enter the school with above-average standards of attainment in literacy and improve further as they progress through the school. Provision for the development of pupils' literacy is unsatisfactory because the school's policy is not consistently implemented in all subjects.
55. In most subject areas, the policy is recognised in the subject documentation, but only in history is the policy fully in operation, with displays of subject language, a rigorous marking policy and opportunities given to pupils to speak in class. In science and physical education, subject language is used well, and in textiles, key words are displayed. In other subjects, although subject language is employed during lessons, there are no consistent strategies for reinforcing its use by pupils.
56. Pupils read well and with good understanding, although reading as a leisure pursuit declines in popularity as girls progress through the school. They have good standards of technical accuracy and write well, although their knowledge of more sophisticated vocabulary is limited. Except for those girls who choose to study drama at GCSE, and in history lessons, speaking skills are not as highly developed as they should be. Too many pupils are reluctant to express themselves at length or engage in prolonged dialogue, a tendency that persists across all year groups and into the sixth form.

57. Since the previous inspection, girls' presentational skills, as seen in assemblies, have improved.

Modern foreign languages

Overall, provision for modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Leadership and management have very good potential for development.

Weaknesses

- Although GCSE results are consistently well above average overall, they are not as good as they should be.
- Pupils do not gain enough A*/ A grades at GCSE.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall, mainly because of weaknesses in Spanish.

Commentary

48. GCSE results in French, German and Spanish have consistently been well above the national average. However, in French, the number of pupils gaining the highest grades is just below the average for selective schools, and in German and Spanish, it is below the average.
49. Overall, standards in the current Year 9 are well above average in French, above average in German and average in Spanish. The differences reflect contrasts in the amount of time pupils have spent learning the languages and in the quality of their learning. In German and often in French, pupils develop their writing skills very well and their grammatical accuracy is very good. They listen carefully and speak the languages well and with good pronunciation, especially when the teaching is vigorous and forces pupils to participate fully. In Spanish, pupils are much less confident and do not use the foreign language often enough in lessons to make adequate progress. Pupils' achievement in French and German is very good, including that of pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language. In Spanish, achievement by Year 9 is only satisfactory.
50. Overall, standards in the current Year 11 are above average. Although this represents satisfactory achievement overall, standards vary across the languages more than is the case in Year 9, especially in speaking and listening. Standards are better in German than in French and Spanish. Year 11 pupils have not developed written language skills as well as they should, partly as a result of following a course with insufficient emphasis on continuity. Many cannot use tenses well enough. Nevertheless, by Year 11 the gifted and talented and higher-attaining pupils often write with flair and accuracy. A significant proportion of other pupils still need a great deal of support from teachers to re-draft examination coursework.
51. Although there is much good teaching, the quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory overall. The main areas of weakness are in Spanish in Years 8 and 9, and in Spanish and sometimes in French in Years 10 and 11. There has been a rapid turnover of Spanish teachers in recent years. Teaching and learning are mainly very good in German classes. Overall, one-third of the lessons seen during the inspection were very good or excellent. A strong feature of these high-quality lessons was the teachers' continual and vigorous use of the foreign language which inspired all pupils to participate fully in oral work. Here, the level of challenge and intensive language practice was very high and teachers demonstrated real understanding of how able pupils should build up their language skills. In the unsatisfactory lessons, which accounted for a third of the total seen, the pace of teaching was slow and teachers used English far too much. Pupils' responses were muted and their achievement unsatisfactory.

52. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The curricular area is in transition; a new curricular manager has been appointed who has proven very good leadership and management skills in the German department. There is real potential for co-ordinated organisation and monitoring procedures, which are currently evident only in some areas, to be developed throughout the whole department. Modern foreign languages are in need of an extra specialist classroom. In Years 10 and 11, there are shortages of textbooks suitable for the requirements of new GCSE syllabuses. Very interesting ICT work is being developed in French for use by pupils and teachers. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Pupils show good achievement from Year 7 to Year 9.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive and they work very hard.
- The department is well staffed by appropriately qualified and experienced teachers.

Weaknesses

- Achievement by higher-attaining pupils is unsatisfactory across Years 10 and 11.
- There has been insufficient development and improvement since the last inspection.
- The accommodation and resources to support learning are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

48. Results in the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national averages. They match those attained by pupils in other schools who were at an equivalent standard at the end of Year 6, but were below the standards evident in similar schools. Over recent years, there has been slow but consistent improvement. Results in 2003, for which national averages have yet to be published, are likely to continue this trend. Evidence gathered during the inspection confirms that these standards are being maintained. With the exception of a small number of lower-attaining pupils, all are working at the higher levels expected of pupils.
49. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results were well above national averages. The proportion gaining the higher grades (A* to C) matched the average for pupils who had similar attainment at the end of Year 9 but was below the average for similar schools. The proportion gaining the highest grades (A* or A) was low, and well below that of similar schools. In 2003, a similar proportion gained higher grades but the numbers achieving A* or A were almost half that of 2002.
50. Observation of lessons and examination of pupils' books indicates that the present Year 11 will match the standards of 2002, including a similar percentage of the highest grades. A much larger proportion of Year 10 is now following the higher-tier GCSE course, which is the only one that includes A* and A grade work. At this early stage, judgements are tenuous, but there is evidence that more pupils should gain the highest grades.
51. Pupils enter the school with standards above national averages. The improvement to well above the national figures evident by the end of Year 9 shows good achievement. The levels of achievement in Years 10 and 11 are varied. Lower- and average-attaining pupils achieve well but the highest attainers make moderate progress and their achievement at the end of Year 11 is unsatisfactory.

52. None of the lessons observed during the inspection was unsatisfactory, the majority were good and a few were very good. All teachers are well qualified and organise classes well. They enjoy very good relationships with pupils and are fully committed to their welfare and learning of the subject. Pupils respond by working very hard and doing everything asked of them. However, over time, teaching is less successful. Each new concept is explained and pupils are given a prescribed method for solving problems, based on the new knowledge, which is then practised in class. Most homework consists of further practice and the insistence on very high quality presentation for all work makes this practice more time-consuming than it need be. The emphasis on orthodox procedures rather than understanding, which would encourage pupils to find their own way through problems, leads to lessons that lack stimulation and limit active learning. Whilst this style of teaching gives security and competence to lower-attaining pupils, it stifles the imagination and independence of the higher-attaining pupils. An ability to repeat a technique throughout a textbook exercise results in correct work but makes little intellectual demand and does not reveal any misconceptions.
53. On a day-to-day basis, the department is now managed efficiently and is well organised. Teachers work together as mutually supportive colleagues. However, over recent years there has been little or no development or improvement. There are now schemes of work but these are largely an extended description of the syllabus, with references to the textbook. There is no organised way of sharing good practice or building a stock of teaching resources to support the learning of given topics. The quality of teaching is not monitored. The department's response to the National Numeracy Strategy is unsatisfactory. Marking of pupils' homework is thorough. Long-term assessment of pupils' attainment and the use of the data to monitor achievement and the quality of teaching are underdeveloped. The newly-appointed head of department, well supported by the recently promoted teacher in charge of Years 7 to 9, is starting to analyse the department's strengths and weaknesses. Improving the achievement of higher-attaining pupils is dependent on rapid and effective strategies to extend the current narrow range of teaching methods.
54. The four dedicated teaching rooms are insufficient for the present size of the school. Some classes have lessons in spare rooms all over the school, which limits the teaching strategies that can be used and makes the monitoring of teaching problematic.
55. Apart from a good supply of textbooks, the department has few resources with which to enrich learning. There is only one overhead projector, no graphical calculators and the provision for ICT is minimal. These shortcomings limit the variety of learning opportunities.
56. Since the last inspection, there has been unsatisfactory improvement. In particular, there has been a failure to address the identified weakness that few pupils attain the highest grades at GCSE.

Mathematics across the curriculum

57. When pupils enter the school, they have the skills to meet the numeracy requirements of all parts of the curriculum. The development of these skills is sufficient to continue meeting these needs throughout the main school and sixth form.
58. Teaching in some subjects contributes well to the development of pupils' numeracy skills. Teaching in design and technology covers measurement, calculation and graphics in depth. There is particularly good use of ICT to aid the learning of these skills. History and geography teaching add significantly to pupils' understanding and use of statistics. In science, lessons constantly reinforce basic mathematical competence.
59. However, there is no whole-school policy designed to co-ordinate this work and no one has the designated responsibility for this aspect of the school's curriculum. There has been no audit of the mathematical requirements of the wider curriculum, nor of the provision within different subjects. Opportunities for subjects such as art, modern foreign languages and physical

education to reinforce pupils' learning have not been identified. A day of in-service training has been devoted to numeracy, which has helped teachers to use commonly agreed conventions when using mathematical techniques.

60. The key skills programme in the sixth form underpins students' development of mathematical skills and this aspect of the post-16 curriculum is well organised and effective.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Standards are consistently well above the national average.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Teaching is good overall and some is very good.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lesson planning is also very good.
- Resources are used effectively, and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and very well behaved.

Weaknesses

- Marking of work varies, and some pupils are not well informed about how they might improve.
- ICT is not used sufficiently.
- Spiritual, cultural and multi-cultural aspects of science are not well developed.

Commentary

48. Standards are consistently well above the national average and there is no significant difference in the attainment of different groups of pupils.
49. The results of national tests at the end of Year 9 are well above the national average at both level 5 and above and at level 6 and above, and this has been so for the past three years. This represents good achievement for many pupils over their first three years in the school, including those few pupils with special educational needs. In comparison with similar schools, they are well above average. Pupils of all abilities in Year 8 demonstrated good understanding of how they might carry out an investigation into the effect of increasing temperature on enzyme activity. They successfully used brainstorming and other techniques to assist their planning and use of variables.
50. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are also well above average. Most pupils do double science at GCSE and a proportion, typically around 25 per cent, study separate science subjects at GCSE (triple science). The achievement of double award pupils is very high; the proportion gaining grades A* to C is well above the national average, and this has been so since before the last inspection in 1998. In comparison with similar selective schools, the proportion of pupils gaining these higher grades is just below average and has been fairly stable around this mark since 2001. Those doing three separate science subjects do very well indeed and in most years all pupils in this group gain passes in the A* to C range. For these pupils, success in the higher grades is in line with, and often above, that of all selective schools. Triple science pupils in Year 11 achieved well and showed very good knowledge and understanding in their work on genetics and inheritance. Similarly, lower-attaining pupils in Year 10 talked confidently about their understanding of atomic structure and although productivity was low for some, they achieved as well as they are able. As they progress through the course, pupils show increasing responsibility and maturity in the way they work independently and in small groups.

51. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall, and there are examples of very good practice in all years. The display of learning objectives and the recent use of starter and plenary activities are strong features of many lessons. Thorough and detailed planning, together with the effective use of resources and focused questioning, helps pupils to do well and they respond with enthusiasm. However, weaker teaching was characterised by slow pace, poor timing and a less effective or inappropriate use of resources.
52. The leadership and management of science are good and documentation is outstanding. The large team of teachers and technicians is well supported by the new head of department and teachers have high expectations of their pupils. There is a keen sense of purpose to their work and their knowledge and understanding of science is high.
53. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in the way the science curriculum is organised, together with enhanced resources to support new courses and styles of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these support learning well. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching is not yet well developed and insufficient use is made of ICT. The good range of extra-curricular activities is a strength. Science has a popular and positive image in the school and is enjoyed by pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision of ICT for pupils in Years 7 to 11 is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Attainment in ICT is above average by Year 11.
- The specialist teaching of ICT is good.
- Specialist ICT areas are well resourced and effectively managed.

Weaknesses

- There are no specialist ICT lessons in Year 9.
- There is insufficient access to ICT to promote the full use of ICT in subject teaching.

Commentary

48. Attainment in ICT by the end of Year 9 is average overall. It is well above national expectations for those aspects of the subject evaluated in formal teacher assessments, but currently pupils do not have the opportunity to cover the full programme of study for this subject. This is because ICT is taught as a timetabled subject in Years 7 and 8 but not in Year 9. The standards reached by pupils through cross-curricular ICT provision in other subjects is variable but on balance, broadly average.
49. By the end of Year 11, attainment is above average, with most pupils gaining GCSE at the higher grades. In Years 10 and 11, most pupils study a short-course GCSE in ICT. They are fluent in their use of ICT across a range of applications. Coursework shows a good emphasis on the use of ICT to communicate, for modelling and for information-handling. Pupils are well supported by additional resources on the school's Intranet. The standard of presentation is very high and the best work shows a good depth of study, for example an investigation of the relationship between radius and volume of a cylinder as an example of high-level modelling. Pupils' achievements at this level are good.
50. Teaching and learning are good overall and in about a fifth of lessons, the quality of both is very good. Teachers have an in-depth knowledge of their subject. In a Year 8 lesson where teaching was very good, pupils undertook a complex procedure to create a spreadsheet to represent a public information system. They set up dynamic linking to a website to automatically update the display. The teacher made sure that all pupils made progress with the task and made good

use of questioning to check that pupils understood key points. Over the lesson, pupils learnt very effectively and made very good progress towards higher levels in the communication and modelling strands of the subject.

51. In a Year 11 lesson where teaching and learning were good, the teacher explained how to set up a database to validate data entry. A complex subject was explained with good illustration, using a whiteboard. Pupils responded to the teaching by working in a thoughtful and systematic way, showing a good level of independence in their learning. Guidance was offered at an individual level, which aided understanding and progress. Relationships in all lessons seen during the inspection were good. Pupils demonstrated the ability to review and improve while using ICT.
52. Leadership for ICT developments is satisfactory overall but has been slow to find solutions to gaps in provision. The management of ICT is a strength in most respects. Good standards are being promoted. The school's Intranet provides good support for learning. The introduction of the new ICT framework within the National Strategy has run smoothly. ICT systems are managed effectively and work reliably.
53. Overall, pupils' achievement in the use of ICT is good, although the breadth of use requires further development. Pupils show a good attitude to work when using ICT. The ability to make use of source materials from the Internet is improving their research and presentation skills. Since the last inspection, attainment in ICT at GCSE has improved to the point where nearly all pupils achieve a higher-grade GCSE pass.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

54. There is a good level of confidence, interest and awareness among teaching staff of how to use ICT to improve learning in subjects. A majority of teachers now have a laptop computer and most have successfully completed a national training programme for ICT in subject teaching. However, access to ICT areas for teaching subjects is restricted and as a result, the use of ICT across the curriculum is not yet fully developed. However, some notable examples of teaching using ICT were seen during the inspection, including the use of ICT in science, music and careers education.
55. Most pupils have ICT at home and there is open access to ICT facilities during the day. In consequence, pupils are increasingly choosing to use ICT as a medium in which to learn in their subjects. The availability of a broadband Internet connection has been particularly effective in supporting research-based approaches to learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Teachers are well-qualified and explain difficult ideas well.
- Pupils work very hard in lessons, and this contributes to the progress they make.
- Residential fieldwork in Year 10 improves practical and analytical skills.

Weaknesses

- Higher-attaining pupils, especially in Year 11, are not doing as well as they should.
- Teaching does not plan well for the differing needs of pupils.
- Insufficient leadership has been given to teachers on ways of raising achievement.

- GCSE results in this subject, while well above national averages, are lower than pupils gain in their other subjects.

Commentary

48. GCSE results are well above the national average, although the proportion of pupils obtaining higher grades is low and well below that for similar schools. Pupils are not doing as well in geography as they are in other subjects. Not enough use is made of available information to plan for improvement
49. Standards of work for Year 9 are above national expectations and the majority of pupils show satisfactory achievement from their starting point, although there is some under-achievement by higher-attaining pupils. No pupils with special educational needs were seen. Pupils have good skills and showed good understanding of patterns and processes in work about beaches and earthquakes. Year 7 pupils soon learnt how to interpret graphs and trawl atlases for information. In both work and assessments, pupils rarely follow a research process or devise their own questions for investigation in order to improve their critical skills. When they do, they learn well, as in a Year 9 lesson about earthquakes.
50. Standards observed during the inspection in Year 11 were above average, but there is scope for higher attainment. Pupils improved their skills and understanding of geographical patterns and higher-attaining pupils gave concise interpretations of storm hydrographs. They showed good awareness of current concerns about modern farming methods. Tests show that pupils remember information well. While pupils work very hard, higher-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented, under-perform in relation to their potential, because there are insufficient opportunities for them to work independently. In one Year 11 lesson, for example, pupils worked with limited involvement, at the same pace, copying diagrams and making notes. They were insufficiently challenged and made slower progress in their learning than they should. Overall, achievement in relation to pupils' capabilities in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
51. Throughout, teachers reinforce numeracy effectively; for example a Year 11 class used its numeric skills to analyse and test fieldwork results. Pupils are helped to extend their vocabulary, and given the opportunity, they write well for purpose and at length. Much emphasis is placed on note taking that is useful for revision, but not enough on research and writing critically. Pupils respond clearly and thoughtfully to questions but lack opportunities to develop their discussion skills through group work or collaborative activities. ICT is not used enough to develop research skills.
52. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory overall. While many individual lessons are satisfactory and some good, particularly in Years 7 to 9, their impact over time, as shown in the work seen, does not raise standards sufficiently. Teachers' knowledge of their subject allows them to answer pupils' questions well and help them to absorb difficult ideas; they manage pupils well, generally using relevant resources, so that they come to lessons prepared to work hard. These strong features were shown in an imaginative Year 9 lesson. After an interesting starter in which pupils defined 'scientific method', the teacher set up two mysteries for pupils to follow the research process. Video extracts aroused their curiosity and led to spontaneous suggestions about the causes of uplift along the Alaskan coastline, well based on previous work. Shrewd questioning by the teacher helped all pupils to make good contributions. Higher-attaining pupils in particular explained convincingly how the uplift had happened. Weaker features of teaching are that teachers do not plan well for pupils' differing needs or do not always make sure that clearly defined outcomes are known to pupils so that they know what they are expected to do. Rushed finishes of lessons mean that the value of feedback to evaluate what has been achieved is lost. Much marking is unhelpful and does not give pointers for improvement. Some homework lacks challenge.
53. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory, with insufficient lead being given to raising standards and ways of achieving this. Assessment is not used enough to modify work plans or

to guide individual improvement. Work schemes do not include teaching and learning approaches and new initiatives have not been systematically implemented. Planning for Years 10 and 11 remains weak. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- There is very good leadership and management.
- There is very good teaching.
- The curriculum is very good.

Weaknesses

- Insufficient use is made of ICT.

Commentary

48. GCSE results in 2002 show that all pupils achieved a pass at grades A* to G, and 75.8 per cent passed at grades A* to C, which is well above the national average and above the national pass rate for girls. These results represent a slight dip in the subject's performance compared to previous years. However, the unvalidated results for 2003 show that 95.75 per cent passed at A* to G, and that half the cohort achieved an A* or A grade. The results of Teacher Assessments in Year 9 show a steady trend above the national average for previous years, with 92 per cent of pupils assessed in 2002 as being at Level five or above. In 2003, a further 16.5 per cent of pupils achieved Level six or above, indicating a strong upward trend.
49. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 9 and pupils achieve very well in relation to their capabilities during their first 3 years in the school. Pupils in Year 7 are able to question the reliability of historical sources, as seen in their work on King John. By Year 9, pupils were able to understand the factors that led to suffragette militancy and the response of the government. Standards are again well above average by the end of Year 11, indicating further very good achievement across Years 10 and 11. Pupils in Year 10 could analyse the impact of the Vietnam war on American public opinion and by Year 11, they were able to understand the concept of criminalisation in the context of seventeenth century attitudes to witchcraft, with the highest-attaining pupils being able to analyse the changing pattern of crimes against the state over several centuries.
50. Teaching is very good and has several excellent features. The pace of lessons enables pupils to learn rapidly and the excellent planning allows them time to consolidate their learning. Pupils are also helped to learn by very effective questions, which enable them to understand a topic in a wider context and which reflect the very good subject knowledge of the teachers. There is very good integration of the learning of historical skills within the learning of a topic; for example, in Year 9 lessons, pupils used historical sources to record the development of the suffragette movement in the early twentieth century. Teachers make regular use of enquiry questions that require pupils to reach conclusions; for example, as to whether women won the vote or were given it. The explicit valuing of pupils' ability to express their ideas orally as well as on paper is a significant strength of the teaching, as it enables pupils to test and refine their perceptions very well. Pupils are often asked to reach provisional conclusions, which helps them to assess their own learning. Pupils are also helped to learn well because relationships are secure and the classroom environment is stimulating, as seen in a Year 8 lesson on slavery, where pupils were interested to see the displayed portrait of an ex-slave after learning about his life.

51. Leadership and management are very good. The curriculum is very well planned, for example in its thematic approach in Years 9 to 11, which enabled pupils to compare issues faced by rulers in different periods. There is a consistent teaching and learning style across the department which is very well promoted and includes very good practice in developing pupils' literacy skills. Assessment of pupils' progress is systematic and resources are very effectively deployed. The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual development of pupils, especially in its work on the Holocaust. Pupils' social skills are promoted through teachers' encouragement of spoken opinions, and their knowledge of the nature of past societies is actively planned for in the curriculum. Provision for pupils' moral and cultural development is good, for example in work on individuals such as Edith Cavell and the treatment of black slaves, and in the educational visits undertaken by all year groups, for example to the battlefields in France.
52. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Teaching is even stronger, as it is now consistently very good and often excellent. The "Key Stage 3 strategy" has been implemented very well, particularly in the regular use of starter exercises and plenaries where pupils are asked to reflect on their learning. Citizenship education is explicitly planned and taught, for example in a Year 8 lesson that examined the nature of modern political campaigning and then compared it to the options faced by nineteenth century abolitionists of slavery. Insufficient use is made of ICT to help pupils develop more independent learning skills and critically evaluate sources of information beyond the classroom as part of their citizenship education.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- The very positive attitude of pupils helps to ensure that religious education makes a substantial contribution to their intellectual and personal development.
- Teaching and learning are generally good and often very good.
- Very good leadership provides clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations.

Weaknesses

- The allocation of time for most pupils in Years 10 and 11 is below the minimum specified in the agreed syllabus and some pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.
- The shortage of time in Years 12 and 13 is a lost opportunity for students' enrichment and further personal development.
- Teachers make insufficient use of levels of attainment to tell pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

48. At the end of Year 9, pupils' work is well above average. In their use of biblical texts, pupils show a high level of interpretative skill and discernment. They distinguish between scientific and mythic purposes and understand how differences of emphasis lead to different attitudes to the environment. At the end of Year 11, standards are more variable, but most pupils' work is above average. Pupils who follow the GCSE course reach a standard well above average; their results in recent years have been above the national average for selective schools and among the best results in the school.
49. In Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve well and acquire a very secure foundation for further study. The study of Islam in Year 7 introduces pupils to basic concepts such as revelation. They learn the correct use of specialist vocabulary and develop their understanding of distinctive religious ways of thinking. Attitudes are very positive, which helps to ensure that religious education makes a substantial contribution to pupils' personal development. In Years 10 and 11, those

on the GCSE course achieve well and most other pupils' achievement is satisfactory. For a small number (those who do ten GCSE courses), achievement is unsatisfactory due to the shortage of time.

50. Teaching and learning are generally good and often very good. In all lessons, teachers show a clear grasp of purpose and secure knowledge of the religions studied. They explain, for example, the theology of creation and elucidate the competing, but not necessarily conflicting, claims of science and religion. Teachers plan their lessons very well, with clear learning objectives and a structured sequence of activities. The level of challenge is high. They also elicit from pupils very positive attitudes and achieve high standards of behaviour. As a result, pupils listen attentively, speak readily and write productively. Opportunities for more collaborative learning exist and insufficient use is made of levels of attainment to tell pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
51. The very good leadership provides clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations. A new full-time specialist will start in January and the current success is despite transitional staffing arrangements. Management is satisfactory and has the potential to improve as the system of assessment develops, which will enable teachers to track pupils individually and allow the department to monitor and evaluate its own performance.
52. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Attitudes throughout the school are better and in Years 7 to 9, standards are higher. In Years 10 and 11, time remains insufficient to meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus, with the consequence that most pupils do not achieve well and the achievement of some is unsatisfactory. GCSE results, however, are among the best in the school. Provision for students in the sixth form is now much better but the shortage of time limits the opportunity for students' enrichment and further personal development.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Pupils attain well above average standards, and very good GCSE results reflect this
- Standards in food and textiles are very high.
- Teaching is good overall, and sometimes very good.
- Teachers manage pupils well, and this, together with very good pupil attitudes, promotes pupils' independent learning skills.
- Good opportunities for extra-curricular activities support pupils' academic and practical skills.

Weaknesses

- Resistant materials and graphics courses for pupils in Years 7 to 9 lack some cohesion and do not always provide clear progression in designing and making skills
- Some aspects of accommodation and resources limit the quality of the technological experience for pupils.

Commentary

48. Standards for pupils in Years 7 to 9, measured by teacher assessments, are well above average. The teacher assessments are supported by inspection evidence, which showed that pupils in all areas of technology are able to use design procedures in an independent way to produce quality folios of work. This is particularly evident in textiles and food where, by the end

of Year 9, pupils are able to compile detailed design folders with high levels of research and analysis. Standards of presentation are very high and include a range of hand and computer-generated techniques. Practical work is carried out with skill and care, and practical projects provide a worthwhile challenge for the full range of pupils. Opportunities for exploring social, moral and cultural issues are built into many textiles projects. For example, a project to design and make bags was linked to the work of Kandinski and resulted in colourful, imaginative and well-made practical work. Year 9 pupils were able to evaluate items of headgear and formulate a precise design specification to guide future work. Consequently, achievement was high. In contrast, pupils in a Year 9 graphics lesson were developing design ideas without the benefit of a clear specification. While progress during this lesson was good, achievement overall was only satisfactory. Pupils in resistant materials and graphics reach high standards in practical work but achieve less well than pupils in food and textiles.

49. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average. Unvalidated results for 2003 were higher still. Pupils achieve very well across Years 10 and 11. In food and textiles, all pupils attained grades in the A* to C range and although they were not quite as high, resistant materials and graphics results were also well above average. Comparative figures show that pupils perform better in design and technology than in other school subjects. Observations of work during the inspection show that pupils' rate of progress increases at this stage. There is a clear focus on examination objectives and pupils can build on earlier achievements and work in an independent way to reach them. Textiles work is of a very high standard. Pupils have good written communication skills that enable them to write accurate design briefs and specifications and sophisticated evaluations. Food technology pupils have detailed notes and extensive theory folders that support their good understanding of processes and technical vocabulary. Pupils make very good use of ICT to conduct research, process data from questionnaires and present their folders to a high standard. Resistant materials and graphics pupils use high-quality presentation techniques, and higher-attaining pupils can complement this with good modelling techniques. Because courses are structured carefully, pupils of all levels of attainment are able to respond to all stages of a design project and meet assessment criteria.
50. Teaching is good overall and during the inspection, there were some examples of very good practice, especially in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have established good working relationships with pupils, creating a good climate for learning. Where teaching is good or very good, teachers are able to use their experience and knowledge to manage pupils' work and involve them in managing their own learning. Homework is used effectively as part of the strategy for developing pupils as independent learners. Most lessons have a good structure, and lesson objectives are clearly understood by pupils. Explanations are clear and this enables pupils to work with a sense of purpose on individual projects. In the best lessons seen during the inspection, teachers were able to place design and technology in a relevant context by linking the work with wider issues. For example, in one very well-taught textiles lesson, pupils were given the opportunity to consider the social, historical, cultural and religious significance of a variety of hats from around the world. Teachers and pupils receive good support from the technician. There is no formal system for monitoring the quality of teaching, so best practice is not always identified and replicated elsewhere. Assessment procedures are thorough and pupils receive good information about the standard of their work and what they must do to improve. Because much design and technology work consists of open-ended tasks, gifted and talented pupils are able to extend the work on their own initiative. Not all teachers, however, are fully aware of the range within a teaching group or the need to adapt methods and materials accordingly. Pupils' learning is good because, in the main, courses are structured with clear objectives and pupils are given good guidance on how to achieve them. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good because they are actively engaged in worthwhile activities.
51. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear vision for development and a good team spirit has been created. There is a need to clarify the head of department's role and responsibilities within the broader faculty system. A great deal of hard

work has gone into raising and maintaining standards, despite dated and drab accommodation for teaching food technology, textiles and graphics. Teachers enliven their rooms with good quality displays and stimulating material, and good housekeeping prevents the food technology area from deteriorating further. Funding is limited, and one product of the faculty system is that the head of department does not have full control over funding for the whole area. Despite the limited funding, pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum in Years 7 to 9, and only the absence of electronics limits the curriculum for older pupils. The organisation of resistant materials and graphics components for pupils in Years 7 to 9 does not provide the same coherent experience found in other areas of technology. Curricular flexibility and innovation is made difficult by the timetable structure.

52. Since the last inspection there have been good improvements in standards and the quality of presentational graphics.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Although numbers are slowly rising, too few capable pupils opt for GCSE in music.
- Teaching methods do not consistently provide a strong enough link between theory and practice.
- There is some excellent and innovative teaching using music technology.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to study a range of instruments and to participate in choirs and instrumental ensembles.

Weaknesses

- There is a generous allocation of time and very good resources for the subject, but the best use of these is constrained by shortcomings in accommodation.

Commentary

48. Results of teachers' assessments and current standards in Year 9 are above average. GCSE results and standards observed in Year 11 are also above average. Good standards are maintained from entry in Year 7 across all years and, overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in both phases. By Year 9, pupils have very good skills in musical applications of computer technologies, compose with chords, create their own melodies and texts, perform accurately in classroom ensembles, and develop musical knowledge well. They are conscientious, diligent and well behaved. In Years 10 and 11 they develop these aspects further and have a deeper understanding of the music of different cultures.
49. Whilst the proportion of pupils taking GCSE is now above average, many more able and experienced instrumentalists opt not to continue study from Year 10. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers do not make the link between theory and practical music consistently and opportunities to consolidate learning are lost. There is lack of rigour in aural and visual demonstration to link learning with understanding. Consequently, higher-attaining pupils are often inadequately stretched. Teachers are very knowledgeable and the development of pupils' musical vocabulary, writing and ICT skills is good, supported by written homework, which is often researched on the Internet. Where teaching is good or better, skills of musical recall, opportunity for practice and reflection, and playing as an ensemble develop pupils' musical skills well. Learning was outstanding in an exemplary music technology lesson.

50. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Whilst the department has many very good features and offers a favourable environment for teaching, action taken to address the uneven quality and delivery of lessons is not productive. The curriculum allows for too many disconnected experiences when classes have more than one teacher, a feature that is also reflected in individual lesson planning. The sharing of best practice is not effective, and the good procedures for assessment are not being rigorously translated into action for pupils' progress. The allocation of time and resources to the subject is very good. Opportunities to learn instruments or singing are very good and taken up by above average numbers of pupils. There is a very good range of extra performance opportunities, especially for vocal ensembles. These often link well with community provision and the curriculum.
51. Since the previous inspection, the subject has made satisfactory progress; GCSE classes have grown in size and the positive ethos and very good music technology provision of the department have been maintained. The accommodation, whilst new, is unsatisfactory. Poor soundproofing restricts practical work during examination periods; there is poor ventilation; and room size is inadequate for practical activities with full classes, although this is partly alleviated by dividing the class every alternate week.

Example of outstanding practice in music technology

In a Year 7 lesson, pupils were introduced to the principles of music sequencing at computers, making considered musical judgements throughout

All pupils, in pairs, access at their computers a MIDI-file prepared by the teacher. To begin, all tracks on the file are muted, which gives the teacher a starting point for giving crystal-clear instructions to help pupils discover tracks, un-mute, parts, sequence, copy and loop. The prepared file has just enough melodic and rhythmic material to consolidate the learning of beginners, but at the same time 'copy and paste' techniques are demanded that require the pupils to make carefully considered decisions about what sounds musically convincing as they move around the building blocks ('parts') of the file. The three parts in the original melodic tracks all follow the same changes in harmony. Whilst this makes for easy listening of the whole file initially, it soon engages all pupils in complex musical decision-making as they manipulate and refine the file, following their own creative ideas.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Standards in Year 11 are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils draw freely and well from observation.

Weaknesses

- There is not enough monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.
- There are not enough opportunities to experience artwork at first hand.

Commentary

48. In the GCSE examination in 2002, results were well above average, although they declined in 2003. Results vary from year to year, reflecting variations in pupils' prior attainment but are usually well above average. Pupils do about as well in art and design as in most of their other subjects.

49. In Year 9, standards are above average and this is confirmed by the school's teacher assessments. Pupils' achievement is good, since their standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are average in this subject. They work freely and well from observation and they produce detailed drawings of coats and bags, showing growing confidence and accuracy. Their sketchbooks are carefully presented, and they often use ICT to research the work of other artists and designers. Higher-attaining pupils make good gains in their skills in painting and produce complex designs based on the study of plant forms. However, there are not enough opportunities for three-dimensional work and pupils' work in this area is rather tentative as a result.
50. In Year 11, standards are well above average. Pupils continue to make good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject and their achievement is good. Higher-attaining pupils extended their skills in observation to produce large detailed plant studies, informed by the work of Georgia O'Keefe. These were very well observed and striking in effect, using tissue paper and oil pastel to create subtle colours and textures. Average- and lower-attaining pupils paint very effectively, and their bright compositions based on Australian Aboriginal art showed an assured use of colour and technique. Pupils also used ICT well to produce interesting photomontages of high quality, which showed developing skills in composition. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to gain first-hand experience of the world of art and design, for example by visiting galleries or sketching outdoors. As a result, their understanding of the importance of scale is rather limited.
51. Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, a variety of materials is available and teachers use their good subject knowledge to give good individual advice and encouragement. For example, in a lesson on the art of different cultures, pupils could draw, paint and make prints and all the materials were easily to hand. In addition, a good range of Native American objects, such as rugs and masks, was available and the teacher played music from the same culture which created an evocative atmosphere. Pupils responded well, and showed good levels of interest and engagement with the materials and ideas; this produced good learning. In a small number of lessons, however, the pace is not brisk enough and pupils work rather mechanically, resulting in learning that is no better than satisfactory.
52. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Weaknesses from the previous inspection, such as planning, have been tackled and efforts have been made to improve assessment practice by building up folders of marked work. However, there is not enough monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, and this is restricting improvement to a level that is no better than satisfactory. In addition, some of the materials provided are not of a high enough quality, reducing the impact of some paintings.
53. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Well above average standards have been maintained in Year 11 and the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' achievement are good.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Achievement across Years 7 to 11 is good.
- Standards in GCSE are well above average, having steadily improved in recent years.
- The curriculum offers the opportunity to pursue activities in depth.

Weaknesses

- Indoor teaching accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' ability to officiate and to evaluate one another's performance is underdeveloped.

Commentary

48. Standards of work by the end of Year 9 are above average. This applies to expectations in games, gymnastics and dance. Pupils exhibit a variety of skills in netball and hockey, often accompanied with technical accuracy; while some lack controlled execution, others are at an advanced stage, and shoot, run or pass confidently in a game context. In gymnastics, pupils show a range of ideas, and many perform individual headstands and paired balances with poise and control. Some girls are accomplished dancers and many show good rhythm and clarity of gesture. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 by pupils is good, as units of work now allow pupils to pursue an activity to some depth. Pupils move apparatus and equipment safely and efficiently.
49. Standards in core physical education are good by Year 11, with many girls achieving well in aerobics, trampolining and netball. Some pupils exceed expectations for their age and demonstrate a high level of skill. Many Year 10 pupils exhibit a high level of technical skill in passing, shooting and creating space in netball. Attainment and progress are good as a direct result of the opportunity to follow activities of their choice, often building on previous work and experience within an activity. Pupils following the GCSE programme generally achieve very well. Pupils' ability to officiate, and to evaluate their own and other's performance, is underdeveloped.
50. In GCSE, all pupils achieve well, with nearly the whole cohort gaining A* to C grades last year. Results are well above national averages for the subject, and in the last cohort over half exceeded their target grade and an impressive number - over one third of the group - gained an A*. Standards of work in theory lessons are very good, with the majority of pupils showing a good understanding of the concept of fitness and the potential effects of physical education on sports participation. Achievement and endeavour across Years 7 to 11 are good and virtually all pupils take part. A significant number of pupils develop and refine their skills in the extra-curricular sports programme and provision for sport generally is good. However, some pupils fail to realise the National Curriculum aspiration of two hours of physical activity per week in Years 10 and 11.
51. Teaching is generally good and sometimes very good. Across Years 7 to 9, teaching is good where challenging objectives are outlined at the start of lessons and teachers provide stimulating demonstration and planned progression at a brisk pace, covering a variety of tasks. In Year 9, teaching is good when it sets realistic tasks for the different levels of attainment within the group, as in a netball lesson when pupils rose to the challenge of developing a series of set plays to overcome a defence in co-operative and then competitive situations. Across Years 7 to 11, learning of practical skills is good, but there are missed opportunities to draw attention to, and underpin, the wider aspects of literacy, numeracy and citizenship. Distinctive features of the teaching are the good command of subject knowledge and the healthy balance of individual, small-group and whole-class activity. Teachers are good role models and often offer inspiration by demonstration.
52. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The policy of setting and the establishment of an in-depth programme in Years 10 and 11 are extending pupils. The department makes the best use of very poor indoor and limited outdoor accommodation. A new team of teachers has only recently come together and is becoming established. There is a reflective culture and a healthy review of practice has taken place, which has led to several significant improvements since the last inspection, particularly the overall improvement in standards of attainment. However, present accommodation is unsatisfactory: it limits provision and the breadth of the curriculum. The gymnasium is too small for many groups and there is no storage space. Provision for the teaching of net games is inadequate. Some changing rooms are away from the teaching venue and are of a poor standard, undermining the high standards set by the department.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Overall, provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Provision for citizenship is planned across Years 7 to 9.
- Skills of participation and responsible action are strong features of lessons.
- Where citizenship outcomes are made clear, teaching is often good.

Weaknesses

- Curricular continuity is inconsistent.
- There are missed opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding about becoming a good citizen.
- The assessment and recording of pupils' progress are weak.

Commentary

48. Standards across Years 7 to 9 are good, but not as good as they could be. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding about key characteristics of the community in which they live. Awareness of the diversity of national, regional, religious and ethnic communities is less assured. Pupils' skills of participation and responsible action are strong and the notion of 'what makes a good citizen' is firmly established in Year 7. At this early stage, the setting of a group ethos and class rules provides a very positive context for work on citizenship.
49. In a variety of subjects, skills of enquiry and communication across Years 7 to 9 are too dependent on individual experience. In some, particularly history and art, pupils are encouraged to analyse information and develop a personal opinion. For example, the majority of Year 8 pupils understand how campaign pressure can effect change, through their work undertaken in history, which has provided opportunities for pupils to think and write about and discuss the abolition of the slave trade and the emancipation of women. A small number of pupils develop skills of enquiry and communication further with such opportunities as the 'Magistrate's Mock Trial Competition'.
50. By the end of Year 11, pupils' skills of participation and responsible action are good. Many pupils take up the numerous opportunities offered to take responsibility, including charity work, the Medway Youth Parliament, School Council and Duke of Edinburgh awards, among others. Pupils' knowledge and understanding about government, human rights and ethical issues is generally well developed through the personal, social and health education programme. Higher-attaining pupils take advantage of opportunities to develop their skills of enquiry and communication, such as the Rotary Club Public Speaking forum. However, not all departments have actively embraced and embedded them in their department's work. As a result, comparable activities are not yet available for all pupils. Some pupils make too little progress, because citizenship outcomes are often lost in subject delivery across the general curriculum. In some subjects, there are missed opportunities to reinforce and extend skills of enquiry and communication or extend the understanding of issues central to the development of society.
51. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some very good teaching. Some teachers have high expectations and articulate clear objectives to their pupils. In the good lessons, pupils are encouraged to develop informed opinions and challenge the opinion of others. In a Year 8 art lesson, pupils exploring art in other cultures were encouraged to appreciate diversity and consider other peoples' experiences. Year 11 pupils in a personal, social and health education lesson considered the issue of 'fair trade' and exploitation, and this provided the basis for an

assembly. The weakest teaching is characterised by a reluctance to embrace the principles of citizenship.

52. A very positive feature of the work in this subject area is its extension into the sixth form, where some key skills sessions underpin the roles of teamwork, co-operation, listening and leadership skills. Pupils often contribute to or help with extra-curricular clubs, particularly in coaching sports teams and taking responsibility for younger pupils on foreign trips. The assessment and recording of pupils' achievements are weak. Current procedures do not provide clear feedback to staff and pupils about what they have learned and how best to target future teaching to meet pupil needs.
53. A senior manager has led the introduction of citizenship well. The personal, social and health education programme is now a structured programme that contains a clear citizenship strand. However, continuity of the programme is impeded, because too many departments have not put in place their explicit contribution to the citizenship curriculum.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	9	100	96.1	33.3	48.7	80	85.1
Business studies	21	100	96.4	33.3	32.8	76.2	76.5
Chemistry	14	100	94	42.9	45.9	82.9	81.1
English literature	35	100	98.5	57.1	43.7	92	84.3
French	9	100	96.2	11.1	46.1	73.3	83
History	7	100	97.1	57.1	41.1	94.3	81.2
Mathematics	11	100	93.3	63.6	52.2	98.2	84.7
Psychology	26	100	94.7	57.7	40.1	89.2	78.7
Sports studies	6	100	95.4	0	29.5	66.7	73.2
Music	3	100	96.6	0	41.6	66.7	70.5
ICT	14	100	84.3	50	24.5	88.6	64.3

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

English literature was the subject focused on during the inspection. Sample Year 12 and 13 lessons were seen in theatre studies. In these lessons, teaching was very good and students achieved well.

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Results in examinations at A level are good.
- Teaching is good.
- Students are highly motivated.

Weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent.
- Students do not have sufficient opportunities to develop independent attitudes and opinions.

Commentary

48. Standards by the end of Year 13 are well above average. In 2002, the percentage of female students who obtained grades A and B at A level was significantly higher than the national average for female students, and the percentage of all students obtaining higher grades was above that of all students nationally, although in both instances the percentage of A grades was lower. Male students performed a little less well than female students.
49. Students enter the course with above-average standards of attainment and are keen to improve on their previously high standards; as a result, they achievement very well. Students develop good critical and analytical skills, appreciate writers' intentions and can relate works to their historical and contextual influences. In one Year 13 class, higher-attaining students, studying Keats's 'Ode To Autumn', identified the rhyming couplet device that precedes the last line of each stanza and related this to autumn as a period of transition. In the same lesson, students recognised the idealistic nature of Keats's political sympathies at the time of the Peterloo massacre.
50. Teaching is good overall. There is a great deal of very good, and some excellent, teaching, and the quality is never less than satisfactory. In the best lessons, by skilful questioning techniques and with clear objectives, teachers provide guidelines for students to pursue independent areas of investigation, encouraging them to voice opinions and ideas confidently. Students are engaged energetically, enthused by the teachers' lively, committed attitudes and obvious enjoyment of the activity and are exhilarated by the experience. Year 12 students were quickly drawn into exploration of the opening chorus speech of 'Dr Faustus' through discussing the different interpretations of 'drama' and its use by contemporary media in describing current political and sporting events. More teachers need to be aware of the usefulness of constructing a word bank of sophisticated vocabulary, not just by observation and repetition, but also by display. In less successful, although still satisfactory, lessons, teachers deliver much information, often with infectious enthusiasm but do not immediately draw students into the exploration and discussion of ideas and impressions. Pace and activities are not sufficiently varied. Students' work is carefully marked, with a great deal of helpful diagnostic comment.
51. Leadership and management are good. Courses are well organised; a very good assessment system provides students with the criteria against which their work is marked and shows clearly how they can improve. Students spoke with appreciation of the quality of criticism and advice they receive. Although the accommodation is attractive, classrooms are too small for some of the larger groups. Provision for, and access to, ICT is very good and used well by students. Male and female students joining the school in Year 12 from other establishments are quickly integrated into the department's activities and there is an expanding programme of visits to live theatre.
52. Since the previous inspection, good standards have been maintained and difficulties associated with staffing the department have diminished. Improvement is good.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- A level results are generally average, although in 2003 they were well above average.
- Standards in Year 12 are above average.
- Teaching in Year 12 is very good and students learn very well as a result.
- Support for learning is good, with a language laboratory and language assistant.

Weaknesses

- Students have no opportunity for a residential visit to France organised by the school.

Commentary

48. A level results are consistently average in national terms but in 2003 the unvalidated results were well above average. AS results are average overall, and in 2002 and 2003 were above average. Students achieve well to gain these results.
49. Standards in the current Year 13 are average. The group is very diverse in ability, ranging from talented students to students who have gained lower grades in the AS examinations. Many students lack confidence in speaking and several lack the vocabulary to express their opinions in general discussion. Higher-attaining students are able to answer questions well and with good accents, and they re-use newly-learned words well in discussion. The teaching does not always cater for all levels of attainment, however. One lesson seen during the inspection, on the former French colonial empire, proceeded at the pace of higher-attaining students, leaving the average- and lower-attaining students behind. Students' written work reflects their ability level but overall, the amount written for essays is low. Students are not expected to re-draft their work after careful marking by the teacher, nor do they keep a log of their independent reading and listening work.
50. Standards in the current Year 12 are above average. Students are only a little way into the AS course but they are already making the transition from GCSE level very well. The group is made up mostly of higher-attaining students, who absorb vocabulary and the more challenging grammar well. In a lesson on French leisure activities, students exploited the clearly-presented new expressions and key words effectively. The benefit of the language laboratory was evident in the follow-up listening activity, as students could follow the well-chosen recording at their own pace. They achieved very well in the lesson, as a result of effective teaching.
51. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although better in Year 12 than in Year 13. Teachers generally use French all the time but they differ in the speed of its delivery, from slow to very rapid. Most students respond well to a vigorous approach but their learning flags when the delivery is unchallenging. Teachers generally plan their lessons well and the range of resources is good. Students are expected to use the Internet and work independently but teachers do not monitor this aspect of their work rigorously enough. From next October, Year 12 students will have extra group support from a language assistant and in Year 13, they will receive individual support.
52. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Materials and ideas are shared very well between teachers and they work well together. Monitoring of teaching and students' independent work would establish a more co-ordinated approach to teaching and expectations of students. There is currently no opportunity for students to take part in a residential study or exchange visit to France. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- Results in A level examinations have been consistently above the national average.
- Students have positive attitudes towards their studies and work very hard.
- A stable and appropriately qualified staff provide sound teaching.

Weaknesses

- The numbers taking the A level examination are low.
- Teaching provides students with insufficient opportunities to develop independent thought and critical thinking.
- The monitoring of students' work in different parts of the course is not sufficiently co-ordinated.

Commentary

48. Results in A level examinations in 2002 were well above the national average. Over recent years, results have been consistently above the national figures. The national figures for 2003 are yet to be published. The proportion of students who gained the higher grades (A or B), in 2003 matched that of 2002. Results in the AS level examination were well above the national figures in 2002. The results for a larger number of students in 2003 were less good, with nearly a third failing to gain a pass grade. Observation of lessons and the examination of students' records of work indicate that students who have continued on to A level are matching the standards of the last two years.
49. Comparison of the standards attained at A level with individual performances at GCSE indicates satisfactory achievement by all students. Higher and lower attainers gain grades that are commensurate with their capabilities. Boys, who are admitted from other schools, share in this satisfactory achievement.
50. The teaching observed was always satisfactory or better and in half the lessons seen was good. All the teachers responsible for post-16 mathematics also teach in Years 10 and 11, which gives continuity to the students' learning. All lessons provided careful exposition, based on good mastery of the subject, followed by individual consolidation and practice, using appropriate textbook exercises. Levels of students' participation in lessons are, however, low. There is not enough encouragement to question, discuss or explain concepts. This limits the students' ability to develop deeper levels of understanding. Students' clear motivation and high levels of application enable them to master the taught procedures in problem-solving. However, this approach does not facilitate active learning and does not generate enthusiasm.
51. The present head of department was appointed to the post in September of this year. The previous leadership and management have provided a sound basis on which needed improvement can be built. The numbers taking the subject are low, indicating that the learning experiences at GCSE are failing to engender sufficient enthusiasm to study the subject further. The disappointing number of failures at AS level in 2003 by students who had gained a B grade at GCSE suggests that their initial choice was not based on a full understanding of the nature of the course. Four teachers share responsibility for covering the three main strands of the course. There is little co-ordination of the teaching, limiting the closeness with which individual students' progress in the different areas can be monitored. There are few opportunities for teachers to share good practice or to ensure coherence and consistency throughout the students' learning experiences.
52. The only weakness identified in the brief report made by the last inspection was the low numbers taking the subject, a problem that has yet to be successfully addressed.

SCIENCE

Chemistry was the focus of inspection in the sixth form. Biology and physics are also taught at AS and A2 but are not reported; however, it was possible to observe some teaching of these subjects. Examination success is well above the national average in biology, but well below in physics, especially at the higher grades. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the teaching was very good and attainment was very high in all three subjects.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Teaching is very good overall, and resources are used very effectively.
- Students' attitudes are excellent and they are very positive about the course.
- Teachers have outstanding subject knowledge and lesson planning is very good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Retention rates are very high.

Weaknesses

- The proportion of students gaining the higher grades in external examinations is well below the national average.
- Teaching relies heavily on exposition by staff and places less emphasis than it might on students' responsibility for their own learning than.
- The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are poor.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in lessons by students.
- Opportunities for extra-curricular activity are not well developed.

Commentary

48. Chemistry is taught to AS level in Year 12 and to A2 level in Year 13. Retention rates are high and, once settled, students remain for the duration of the course. The great majority of students are from the lower school and they have higher grades at double award science or chemistry at GCSE. Recently, boys have joined the groups in the sixth form and there is no significant difference in the achievements of boys or different groups.
49. Standards have varied over recent years. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades of A and B in external examinations at the end of Year 13 has ranged from well above the national average to well below. Results were exceptional in 2001, when the proportion of students achieving these higher grades was almost twice the national average. However, the most recent results were well below the national average and, with the exception of the 2001 results mentioned above, there has been no significant improvement since the last inspection. Almost all students are successful in the range of grades from A to E.
50. The standard of work seen during the inspection was well above average, and achievement was generally very good. In Year 12, students showed good knowledge of atomic structure and a developing understanding of the concept of ionisation energy and the factors that affect it. In volumetric analysis, they showed competence in doing titrations safely and talked about their work with confidence. Students in Year 13 also had well-developed practical and observational skills in their investigation of Redox reactions.

51. The quality of teaching in both years is very good. The style of teaching is largely traditional and levels of expectation are high. Lesson planning and laboratory organisation are thorough, and resources are used effectively. Health and safety issues are emphasised and the frequent use of focused questions helps students to learn.
52. Leadership and management are good. Teachers insist on very high standards of commitment and behaviour and in response, students show generally high levels of engagement and productivity. There is a keen sense of common purpose to the department's work and both teachers have an outstanding knowledge and understanding of chemistry. Guided by staff, students produce exceptionally well-organised folders that contain detailed and useful notes. Attitudes are very positive.
53. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in the way chemistry is organised and taught. There has been a change of examination board and new schemes of work have been developed. Together with additional texts, these developments support learning well. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching in chemistry are not rigorous or effective. The present longhand methods for recording and reporting students' progress and achievement are dated, slow and restrictive in the present climate of open and rapid access, analysis, support and target setting. Use of ICT is poor and, at present, there are no clubs, extra-curricular activities, trips, visits and lectures specifically for chemistry students. Nonetheless, chemistry is generally popular with students and, given the opportunity, all would choose it again.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning are resulting in high standards and good achievement.
- Leadership and management of all aspects of work is very good.
- There is a steadily increasing uptake for the AS level course, and most students carry on to take A level.

Weaknesses

- Accommodation and resources to support learning are unsatisfactory.
- The large size of some of the classes in Year 12 limits the amount of individual support that can be given to students.

Commentary

48. In the last seven years, no student has failed to gain an A level pass in psychology. The proportion of girls gaining the higher grades (A or B) is consistently well above the national average. This level of attainment is not yet matched by the much smaller number of boys, admitted from other schools, now taking the subject. In 2002, almost two-thirds of students gained an A or B grade at A level, building well from a very good performance in Year 12. A level results in 2003, when almost twice as many took the examination, were similar to those of 2002. All the evidence gathered during the inspection confirms that these standards have been maintained. Students' files contained complete records of work undertaken and every lesson observed was pitched at the level required for the higher grades, with the majority of students clearly coping well.
49. Achievement is good. When students' attainment at A level is compared to their performance in related subjects at GCSE, the results of most students, including boys, exceed expectations. Higher- and lower-attaining students share in this good achievement.

50. Teaching is consistently very good. Both teachers have an excellent command of the subject, which is used well to provide stimulating lessons. Planning is meticulous. All lessons include relevant resources, which illustrate the concepts and knowledge being covered in a way that readily engages students' interest. In all lessons, students are encouraged to work out the logic of psychological concepts and models for themselves. They thoroughly enjoy this sort of learning and emerge with secure understanding of the topics covered. The initial involvement of students in an experiment brought alive a Year 12 lesson on research methods – a topic which can be somewhat 'dry'. The use of up-to-date examples already known to students, gave a Year 13 lesson tremendous impact. Students had to face up to the dilemmas which counsellors and other professionals may face when clients reveal aggressive feelings that could lead to actual violence. The very good relationships between students and teachers made the consideration of a potentially emotional subject a valuable experience for all. Students left the lesson not only more knowledgeable but also wiser.
51. Leadership and management are very good. Every aspect of work is well organised. Printed resources produced within the department are of very high quality, the requirements of the examination are fully understood and the support provided for course work is exemplary. Assessment of students' work is detailed and used very well to provide individual guidance on how to improve. The two teachers share the teaching of all six sets; the care with which both constantly reinforce the links between different parts of the syllabus is a major factor in the success of the department.
52. Accommodation consists of one dedicated room, supplemented by an assortment of other rooms and laboratories. Some of these rooms are too small for the large groups and none lends itself easily to the adventurous teaching methods being employed. This difficulty is compounded by a lack of modern equipment. The subject has insufficient access to overhead projectors, video and ICT equipment. The over-large classes in Year 12 limit the amount of individual tuition that teachers can give to students and can limit the effectiveness of some learning opportunities. Students in these classes inevitably have fewer opportunities to contribute to discussions or to express their own opinions.
53. Improvement has been good over recent years. The numbers taking the subject have risen dramatically and retention rates from AS level to A level are very high. At the same time, standards have improved significantly. The subject is now a major and very successful part of the sixth-form curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Attainment is significantly above the national average.
- Teaching is good.
- Students' coursework is of a high quality.

Weaknesses

None

Commentary

48. Attainment in ICT in 2002 at A and AS level is significantly above the national average. The most recent results show that attainment has increased substantially, with over 80 per cent of students achieving at the higher grades.

49. Teaching is good. Teachers have very good specialist knowledge. Lessons move with a good pace and effectively balance teacher input with practical work. Good use is made of a projection screen, and additional resources are available from the school Intranet. In a lesson where the teaching was good, the teacher provided good quality individual advice as students worked on the design of a database. Students described how data input is validated, showing good understanding and fluency in the use of the database application. The teacher provided a clear summary of key points and clarified future steps in students' work plans.
50. Current standards at A-level are above average. Students' coursework seen during the inspection was of a high standard and demonstrated a rigorous approach to each stage of developing an application. Design specifications were detailed and well-presented and showed good all-round competence in using and applying ICT capability. Discussions with students demonstrated good subject knowledge and an awareness of the criteria for higher grades.
51. Students' response to lessons is very good. Well-developed and friendly relationships create a purposeful working climate. The achievement of students is good.
52. The management of the subject, including assessment, is effective in promoting high standards. Resources for teaching and learning are very good. The network of up-to-date computers makes available a full range of application software and electronic course materials. Students are able to make full use of these systems and to use the Internet for research purposes. A level ICT was not a option at the time of the previous inspection so that no judgement can be made about improvement between inspections.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- There is very good teaching.
- There is very good leadership and management.
- Students' communication skills are promoted very effectively.

Weaknesses

- Insufficient use is made of ICT.

Commentary

48. A level results in 2002 show that all seven students passed at grade A to E and that four achieved grades A or B, which is well above the national average. Results in 2003 were very similar for a cohort of 12 students. AS level results in 2002 were well above average, with 19 out of 21 students achieving grades A to E, and 33 per cent gaining A or B grades. In 2003, all 12 students passed, with 31 per cent passing gaining an A or B grade. There is a steady trend of results that are well above the national average, particularly in the numbers of students achieving a grade A to C; the 2002 results show that the average point score for students in relation to their other subjects was significantly higher than the national average. Standards of work seen in the current Years 12 and 13 are well above the national average.
49. Standards seen during the inspection were well above average. Year 12 students are able to analyse a range of historical sources to evaluate interpretations of events

rapidly and with confidence, for example the position of women during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Year 13 students used their good knowledge base to explore interpretations of Mussolini's economic policy and they were able to make judgements about the relative significance of factors that led to the seizure of power in Russia by the Bolsheviks in 1917 – for example, the role of an individual and the decisions made by the Provisional Government. All students had a very positive attitude to the subject and responded with enthusiasm to tasks that required swift mastery of data, individual contributions to teacher-led discussion and group work.

50. Teaching is very good and has several excellent features. The higher-attaining students are well known to their teachers and their learning is actively promoted in the historiography of the subject, especially the analysis of historians' interpretations. The pace of lessons is rapid but excellent planning allows time for students to reflect on their learning, to make links with prior learning and to be conscious that they are participating in an enquiry that requires them to make judgements and to revise these in the light of new evidence. There is a very good variety of tasks in each lesson, which helps to engage students' interest and their communication skills are developed very effectively, for example in an amusing exercise where they created a washing line with cards pegged out showing evidence for and against the proposition that the women's suffrage movement was in decline in the 1890s. As a result, students make very good progress in lessons and achievement across Years 12 and 13 is very good.
51. Leadership and management are very good. The courses have been selected to enable students to make comparisons between very different societies within a broad theme of revolutionary change. This adds depth to their understanding of historical change and it is also effectively designed to develop their citizenship awareness. Students' work is marked regularly and feedback is helpful and detailed. Materials are very well selected to advance the learning of students and their literacy is promoted well through discussion, the formulation of arguments and an emphasis on the use of historical terminology. Economic awareness is a feature of several courses, for example those that analyse the statistics relating to the economies of China, Russia and Italy. Provision for cultural development is very good, for example through educational visits to the sixth form Auschwitz course, the House of Commons and, together with the classical civilisation department, a biennial trip to Rome. There is insufficient use of ICT. Work seen during the inspection did not suggest that independent learning skills and critical evaluative skills are being promoted through the use of computers in lessons or homework.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology – product design

52. 2002 A level and AS level results for product design were well above average. All students passed, and one third gained A and B grades. The unvalidated results for 2003 show a further increase in the average points score per student and a greater proportion of students gaining higher grades. Standards of work by current students are above average. Product evaluation studies are carried out thoroughly. Very good quality graphic and ICT skills are used to record design ideas and present them to a high standard. Students have good research skills and design folders represent a high level of interest and commitment.
53. Teaching is good. Students receive good help and advice that enable them to make good progress and build on earlier achievements.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Students' performing abilities are very good.
- Relationships are very good and students feel well supported.
- Opportunities for music technology are very good.
- Enrichment activities are very good.

Weaknesses

- Teaching methods do not provide students with enough practical experience.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

48. Groups are too small for proper statistical comparison, but examination results for individual students are similar to grades obtained in their other examinations. Students have very good performing skills, their aural abilities are above average and their composing is satisfactory. All students are confident in pursuing independent research. Their principal area of weakness is formal harmony.
49. Standards by the end of Year 13 are average. Students' achievement in relation to their capabilities is broadly satisfactory. However, when account is taken of the advantage of their already well-developed performing and aural skills, this indicates that more could be achieved in the areas of composing and formal harmony. In work seen during the inspection, higher-attaining students displayed a confident grasp of the stylistic conventions of formal harmony but lower-attaining students struggled to avoid technical errors. Students understand the demands of successful composing and create attractive extended pieces in styles that imitate their performing experience. None of them experiments with different styles, harmonic ranges or tonality. All confidently use the department's computers to operate music programs for scoring and editing their work.
50. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is characterised by conscientious planning, well-organised resources, good opportunities for enriching students' experience through extra-curricular provision, and very good relationships. Lessons are strongly teacher-dominated, and students are not given sufficient opportunities to experiment with new harmonic concepts and internalise these before they are required to write them in manuscript. Students are not sufficiently encouraged to use their aural abilities and their intuitive musical skills in understanding harmonic progressions so that they can more readily distinguish the features of different styles of writing. They also lack encouragement to experiment more widely when composing.
51. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Departmental systems are properly documented, monitoring takes place as part of performance management and new members of staff are well supported. Students' work is assessed against examination criteria and students benefit from regular individual advice. The facilities of the music technology suite further enhance their opportunities. Provision for extra-curricular activity is very good. External establishments such as the Kent Music School provide opportunities for instrumental lessons and ensemble work at an advanced level and good contacts have been formed with a number of private teachers who come into school. The accommodation does not meet the requirements of the subject and is unsatisfactory; rooms are too small, sound-proofing is inadequate and ventilation is poor.

52. In the previous report, standards in music were described as good, but numbers were small. Standards are currently average and groups broadly similar in size, but the introduction of music technology has greatly enriched students' opportunities and experience. Accommodation is much improved, but despite being in a new building, has unsatisfactory features. Overall, improvement is satisfactory.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Work in low relief is well made and highly decorative.
- ICT is used well to create lively photomontages.
- Students' observation work is confident and accurate.

Weaknesses

- There is not enough monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.
- The pace in some lessons is not brisk enough.
- The accommodation is cramped, and there is no designated space for students to work independently.

Commentary

48. Attainment at the end of Year 13 is average. Results in the A level examinations in 2002 were broadly average, though standards dropped in 2003. AS level examinations results followed the same pattern. Results vary greatly from year to year, reflecting variations in attainment and attitude in the fairly small numbers who take the subject. Retention is good, and in recent years, all students who started courses have finished them.
49. Standards in the work of Year 13 students seen during the inspection are average. Higher-attaining students produced richly textured work in low relief, based on a study of churches and cathedrals. These were very well made and highly decorative, using glue and sand to recreate the textures of worn stonework. Observational work is strong; students confidently and accurately convey the complex play of reflections on curved metallic surfaces, such as saucepans and bathroom taps. All students use ICT well to scan their own work and to manipulate shapes and textures to create interesting photomontages. The sketchbooks of the highest-attaining students are rich and vigorous, although those of average- and lower-attaining students are weaker and the links between the work of artists they have studied and their own work are not strong enough. In addition, too much of students' work is on too small a scale and this restricts the impact of their work, especially so when they work with more abstract ideas, for example when exploring subtle qualities in textured and transparent materials.
50. These standards indicate satisfactory achievement during Years 12 and 13, since those students now in Year 13 entered the sixth form with broadly average GCSE results. Students make sound gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject.
51. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, materials and methods are interesting and students are encouraged to experiment vigorously and they listen carefully to the teacher. This was seen in a lesson investigating the coastline, where students cut and crumpled paper and tin foil, and used card and paper to apply the paint vigorously, producing textures and images that evoked the feeling of waves breaking on the seashore. The teacher was also very encouraging, building good relationships, which helped to create high levels of interest and a good pace, leading to good learning. However, at times, students work rather more slowly, without showing high levels of interest or inspiration. The pace of the lesson is not brisk enough and students' learning is no better than satisfactory as a result.

52. Leadership and management are satisfactory and examination courses have been adapted to work to the strengths of the students. However, there is not enough monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, and weaknesses have not been tackled sharply enough to show significant improvement. As a result, improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory, and the quality of teaching and learning and the achievement of students, are no better than satisfactory. In addition, the accommodation is rather cramped and there is no designated space for students to work independently or for them to be able to work on a larger scale more often.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Results at AS level show an upward trend.
- All students gain A to E grades at A-level.

Weaknesses

- Student research and presentation skills are limited.
- Practical teaching facilities are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

48. Standards in the work of Year 12 and 13 students observed during the inspection are in line with expectations. In 2002, all students gained grades A to E at A-level, and attainment at AS level shows an upward trend. Some higher-attaining students are not gaining the grades of which they are capable in Year 13. Students show appropriate knowledge and understanding of the physiological and psychological factors affecting performance, but linking new material with previous learning is sometimes insecure. In a Year 13 session, students were introduced to the interactionist approach and they were uncertain about appropriate links to related aspects of sports psychology. In Year 12, students showed a positive approach to learning about skeletal function but lacked confidence when forced to extend their knowledge and understanding of technical terminology. In both years, students endeavoured to draw on personal experience to relate theory to practical examples. Some students do not read around the topic independently prior to teaching sessions. The presentation and research skills of some students are weak and they lack experience in these key skills. Some students take an approach to learning that is too passive. Overall, achievement is broadly satisfactory.
49. Teaching is generally satisfactory, with examples of very good teaching. Intended outcomes are clearly outlined at the start of lessons and teachers endeavour to provide a range of interesting tasks to engage students. At the time of the inspection, some of the teaching team were new to work at this level. Although knowledge of the subject is at an appropriate level, experience will enable them to provide more stimulating examples to illustrate their teaching. In the very good sessions, pace is maintained throughout and questions are directed at individuals, always encouraging the link between theory, practice and previous learning. The teacher knew her students and was able to direct questions appropriately in order to enhance learning and test their knowledge of the topic. Teachers' expectations of students are often high but insufficient demands are put on students to learn independently and to do follow-up work that enables them to present and disseminate relevant topics. The adoption of a research culture, in which students are expected to research specific themes independently and provide

evidence from the media relating theory to practice, is underdeveloped. Little use is made of extension tasks for the higher-attaining students.

50. There is currently no recreational physical education programme, although students are encouraged to find a place for physical activity in their programmes. Some sixth form students make an invaluable contribution to the extra-curricular programme, not only through representation but also by assisting teaching staff in coaching and administrative duties.
51. Leadership and management of the subject in the sixth form are currently satisfactory. Elsewhere in the school, there is very effective management of physical education and these strong qualities are being applied to adapting the sixth form courses and teaching styles in order to raise standards. Staff and students make the best use of poor facilities for practical work. The current range of books and journals available for research and follow-up work is poor.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Good teaching by experienced specialists has led to above-average standards for Year 13 students.
- The course is well organised and provides a logical progression from GCSE work.
- Good support and guidance for students' academic work also serves to develop independent learning skills.

Weaknesses

- Insufficient access to, and use of ICT limits the range of teaching methods.
- Limited accommodation hinders efficient use of resources.

Commentary

48. In 2002, results at A-level were in line with the national average. Unvalidated figures for 2003 show a drop to below average, against the school's predictions but preliminary evidence indicates that the figure will improve after re-marks. Figures for the last three years indicate a downward trend. Some of this can be attributed to the adjustment needed to the introduction of the revised AS and A2 system, but the department has also recognised that changes need to be made to the way that certain aspects of the course are taught. Inspection evidence shows that standards for current Year 13 students are above average and that changes to how students' work is assessed are effective in monitoring progress and setting targets. Students achieve well across Years 12 and 13.
49. Students understand technical vocabulary very well. Their good verbal communication skills enable them to participate in class discussion at a high level, and teachers can use appropriate terminology with the expectation that it will be understood. Year 12 students, who were still at an early stage of the course, were able to discuss the validity of statistical findings with a high degree of understanding of the concepts underlying the topic. Written communication skills are good and enable students to write independent notes and compile extended answers to essay topics. Where students undertake coursework, their case studies represent thorough in-depth research, clearly written and well presented. Students develop good independent study skills, such as skim reading documents and case study materials. Students' good numeracy skills enabled them to interpret and calculate the graphs and figures needed for the preparation of cash flow forecasts. Good background knowledge and an ability

to see the wider issues affecting business and industry enabled Year 13 students to explore some of the social, moral and ethical issues surrounding the use of market research findings.

50. Teaching is good and leads to good learning. Lessons are well planned and taught with the confidence that arises from good specialist knowledge and experience. Teachers give good individual help and advice, both within the lesson and outside lesson time if students require it. Marking and assessment systems have been revised and strengthened as part of an overall strategy to raise standards. Students receive clear and helpful written information about their work and progress and are fully aware of the criteria against which their work will be judged. In one well-taught Year 13 lesson, students developed a better understanding of how to interpret case study materials and make judgements from raw statistics because the teacher steered the discussion well and helped to extend their answers. Some students were not afraid to admit that they had difficulties with the work and they valued the additional help given. In lessons seen during the inspection, teachers used a limited range of teaching styles. While accommodation has improved since the last inspection, it still places limitations on teaching. Lack of window blinds in one room, for example, prevents the effective use of audio-visual equipment. In addition, lack of access to ICT resources makes it difficult to incorporate modern technology into normal classroom time and limits students' experience of modern business practice. Teachers compensate by utilising contacts with business and industry. Students had very positive views about the quality of teaching and support they received. Whilst not all would be using business studies in future studies or careers, all felt that it was a valuable academic discipline and of value to them as individuals.

51. Leadership and management are good. The two teachers work closely together and both focus on the central issue of raising standards. The course is popular and at present, there are 24 and 17 students in Years 12 and 13 respectively. Few students leave the course prematurely and those who do have good reasons. Entry requirements are flexible and not all students have studied the subject at GCSE level. Indications are that students are not disadvantaged by starting the subject at AS level but there is no formal monitoring to verify this. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
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The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	2	3
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	3

Overall standards achieved		2
Pupils' achievement	3	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	1	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2

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

The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	3	4
The effectiveness of management	2	4

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

