

INSPECTION REPORT

DOVER GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Dover

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118931

Headteacher: Mrs S Lees

Lead inspector: Mr J Ashton

Dates of inspection: 29th November – 2nd December 2004

Inspection number: 268795

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 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Male
Number on roll:	683
School address:	Astor Avenue Dover Kent
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Murray
Date of previous inspection:	26 th April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Dover Grammar School for Boys commands the western heights of the town of Dover, overlooking the ferry port. It is a smaller than average selective school with 683 boys in total, 153 of whom are in the Sixth Form. Its buildings have architectural merit in parts but need substantial capital investment to bring them up to scratch. The great majority of the pupils are white and speak English as their home language. All of the very few pupils from minority ethnic heritages speak English fluently. The school draws from a relatively small area, mostly from Dover and nearby townships in South Eastern Kent. Few pupils have special educational needs, two of whom have statements. Pupils are from a range of backgrounds although, overall, the socio-economic profile of pupils is above average. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is generally well above average, though the school draws from a wider academic range than some other grammar schools. There have been three different headteachers in the last three years. Almost all of the present senior leadership team are new in post from September 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
4492	Mr J Ashton	<i>Lead inspector</i>	
9843	Mrs S Drake	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
1119 0	Dr W Burke	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and design Special educational needs
2268 5	Ms N Moss	<i>Team inspector</i>	English English as an additional language
3029 4	Dr D Gower	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science
1854 2	Mr G Griffin	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology
2024 7	Mr R Parry	<i>Team inspector</i>	Business education
1036 1	Mr F Evans	<i>Team inspector</i>	History Religious education
2971	Ms K Hooper	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology
3755	Mr T Hulbert	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography Psychology
1353	Mr P Canham	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education
2771 9	Mr P Metcalf	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics
2076 7	Mr T Royle	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music Citizenship
4829	Mr I Waters	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages

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PART A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Despite rapid recent improvements **this is an underachieving school** because standards are not high enough, and teaching and learning not as good as they need to be, in the main school. Teaching and learning are good and standards are higher than average in the Sixth Form. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, and good in the case of the new headteacher and senior team. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money at present.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are above average, and teaching, learning and progress are all good in the Sixth Form.
- National test results in Year 9 and GCSE results in Year 11, though well above average, are not high enough compared to those of similar schools. Higher attaining pupils in particular are not challenged well enough in some subjects.
- Teaching and learning are not as good as they need to be to raise standards in the main school.
- Behaviour, attitudes to learning and pupils' personal development are all good. Relationships are generally very good.
- Provision for art and design and history is very good. Weaknesses in the provision for science, information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, and physical education restrict achievement.
- The good leadership of the new senior team is improving the school's performance.
- Accommodation and learning resources, though rapidly improving, are still unsatisfactory.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not being used sufficiently across the curriculum.

Improvement since the last inspection in April 1999 has been satisfactory overall, and has accelerated recently, but there is still much to do. Leadership at the centre is now sharper and more effective. Governance has improved and is now satisfactory. Development planning is much improved, including at subject level. The school monitors its work more rigorously, and puts greater emphasis on continual self-evaluation and making teaching more effective. Some staffing weaknesses still exist. There are ongoing improvements in accommodation but many more are needed. The use of ICT across the school remains unsatisfactory. The school now aspires to be a specialist business and enterprise school, a recently strengthened area of the school's work.

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools**
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	N/A	A	A	D
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A*	A*	A	

Key: A* – best 5% in the country; 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.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is unsatisfactory overall. It is good in the Sixth Form but not good enough in the main school. Pupils of average potential and from a range of social and cultural backgrounds achieve satisfactorily, but too many of those of higher potential are underachieving in the main

school. National test results at the end of Year 9 are in the top five per cent of schools nationally but well below average compared to those of similar schools. GCSE results are well above average but below average compared to those of similar schools. Advanced Level (A Level) results are well above average.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Their attitudes, behaviour and attendance are all good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides pupils with a satisfactory quality of education. The quality of teaching and learning is good in the Sixth Form, but satisfactory in the school as a whole. Assessment overall is satisfactory. The school's curriculum and extra-curricular provision are barely satisfactory, and few courses reflect adequately the world of work. Accommodation and learning resources are unsatisfactory overall. The school's care, guidance and support for its pupils are satisfactory. It is now involving them well in its work and development. The school's partnerships with parents and with other schools and the wider community are all satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The new headteacher and effective new leadership team are turning the school around and dramatically improving it. The governing body is now providing a satisfactory blend of helpful support and constructive challenge to the school's leadership team. Apart from ensuring that there is a daily act of collective worship and that religious education is offered to all pupils in the Sixth Form, they now make sure that the school fulfils its statutory duties. The leadership and management of subjects, though strong in some cases, are not yet consistently good enough. Financial management is now on a sound footing.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are appreciative of the changes that they are beginning to see in, for instance, the expectations of both staff and pupils and the friendly, professional approach of the school's new leadership. The pupils are proud to belong to their school and are delighted to see that, after a difficult period, it is beginning to improve. They praise the quality of many of their teachers and appreciate the openness and changes being brought about by the new leadership team.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do are to:

- Challenge all pupils more, especially the more able pupils, with a view to improving national test and examination results in Years 9 and 11.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise standards in the main school.
- Improve provision in science, ICT, design and technology and physical education.

- Improve further the accommodation and the quality and availability of learning resources.
- Increase the use of ICT across the curriculum.

In order to meet statutory requirements, the school should also ensure that:

- Pupils experience a daily act of collective worship.
- Students in the Sixth Form are offered a course in religious education.

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Sixth Form at Dover Grammar School for Boys is doing well. Sensible, mature, articulate, self-confident and hard-working students are achieving good results in A Level courses. Overall, teaching is good and students achieve well. There are good opportunities for students to follow courses at other colleges. Leadership and management of the Sixth Form are satisfactory. The Sixth Form is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards achieved are above average overall.
- Teaching is good and promotes good achievement.
- Students are mature, hard-working and responsible young men who enjoy the academic atmosphere in the Sixth Form.
- The present accommodation and lack of resources are restricting further progress in art.
- Lack of sufficient ICT resources, mainly computers, is limiting the range of teaching and learning opportunities in some subjects.
- There is no provision for religious education in the Sixth Form.

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. Comments in brackets refer to subjects that were sampled rather than inspected in depth.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision is good in English literature . Good teaching and constructive assessment lead to good learning. (Teaching in French is good and leads to good learning and achievement.)
Mathematics	There is good provision in mathematics . Standards are above average. Teachers' subject knowledge and their positive and productive relationships with students are particular strengths.
Science	Provision is good in chemistry. Teaching and learning are good. (Teaching is very good in biology and good in physics .)
Information and communication technology	Provision is good in ICT . Standards are well above average. Students have positive attitudes. They achieve well and teaching and learning are good.
Humanities	Provision in psychology is very good . Standards are very high. Enthusiastic teaching, combined with profound subject knowledge, results in very good learning. Students are highly motivated. (In the other humanities subjects seen, teaching, learning and achievement are excellent in geography and in government and politics . They are very good in ancient history and in history , good in sociology and philosophy , but satisfactory in law .)
Design and technology	(In design and technology , teaching, learning and achievement are unsatisfactory .)
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art is good . Standards are above average. Teaching and learning are very good and, in some lessons, outstanding. Achievement is very good. (In music , good teaching is leading to good learning and achievement. Media studies is a new subject. Teaching, learning and achievement are good .)

Hospitality, sports, leisure
and travel

(In **sports studies**, teaching, learning and achievement are **good**.)

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Business	Provision In business studies is good . Teaching, learning and achievement are all good, and standards are above course expectations.

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

Advice, guidance and support in the Sixth Form are satisfactory. Students now have a stronger voice in school affairs and regular guidance from subject teachers about how to improve their work. Year 13 students are concerned that individual personal advice about their own higher education prospects is difficult to find and that what is available is not helpful enough. Students are now confident that their views will be listened to and taken into account.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the Sixth Form are satisfactory. Great care is taken to interview and induct students into the Sixth Form. Relationships with teachers and tutors are good. Assessment is satisfactory. The leadership and management of the Sixth Form have recently been strengthened by the appointment of an experienced head of department as assistant head of Sixth Form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are happy in the Sixth Form. They like its friendly ethos, the good teaching they receive and the academic atmosphere. They like the new headteacher and the new management team, and the changes they are bringing about. Students feel that they are now treated with respect as young adults. They are concerned about the accommodation, the lack of facilities (in physical education and ICT) and the shortage of good enrichment activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are above average in Year 11 and in the Sixth Form.
Achievement is good in the Sixth Form but not good enough in the main school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are above average, but below average compared to those of similar schools.
- Achievement in the main school is unsatisfactory overall, particularly in English, science, ICT, design and technology and physical education.
- In some subjects (music, geography and business) achievement is good, and in art and history it is very good.
- In the Sixth Form, standards are above average and overall achievement is good; it is very good in art and psychology.

Commentary

1. On entry to the school, pupils have standards that are well above average overall, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but there are more pupils with lower standards, particularly in literacy, than would usually be found in a selective school. For this reason, in this report, comparisons with similar schools are made with schools where pupils previously attained similarly, rather than with other grammar schools.

2. In recent years, the national test results at the end of Year 9 have alternated year on year between being well above average and being in the top five per cent of schools nationally. However, the overall trend is that the school's results are improving more slowly than results improve nationally, particularly in science. The most recent results were well below average when compared with those of similar schools (*similar schools for Year 9 are those where pupils attained similarly by the end of Year 6*).

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	41.3 (38.4)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	44.2 (42.7)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	39.1 (39.5)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 103 pupils in the year group. These figures are for the latest year that there are national comparison data. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. As befits a selective intake, overall GCSE results in 2003 were well above average when compared with those of all schools nationally. The results, however, were below average when compared with those of similar schools. (*Similar schools for Year 11 are those where pupils achieved similarly at the end of Year 9*). In 2004 the overall results dipped significantly, making the trend for the last five years a declining one, when results nationally have been increasing.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	89 (95)	52 (52)

Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98 (98)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	45.1 (47.8)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 110 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Standards observed in lessons, and in written work scrutinised during the inspection, vary between subjects but are generally either above or well above average, depending on the subject being observed. In some subjects standards are lower than in others, a reflection of satisfactory rather than good teaching and of the underachievement of pupils in those subjects. Standards are highest in, for example, geography, history and art, which reflects the better teaching and more effective leadership in these subjects. Standards are lowest in ICT, design and technology and science. This is due in ICT to unsatisfactory teaching; in design and technology to unsatisfactory teaching, leadership and accommodation; and in science to excessive levels of staff turnover and to teachers not expecting enough from the more capable pupils.

4. Literacy standards are generally above average for all pupils, although writing standards are average. Pupils at this school are articulate. They listen well to teachers. Reading is generally fluent, often with a good level of comprehension. In most subjects, writing often lacks an appropriate sense of audience and contains many inaccuracies of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Numeracy standards across the curriculum are satisfactory. Pupils' command of number is sufficient to support the mathematical demands made by other subjects. Information and communication technology (ICT) standards across the curriculum, however, are unsatisfactory. In too many subjects there is insufficient use of computers to support learning. Consequently, pupils have too few opportunities to practise and develop in other lessons the ICT skills they learn in their ICT lessons.

5. In 2003 and 2004, the school did not reach the demanding targets it set itself for attainment in either the national tests at the end of Year 9 or the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. With some notable exceptions, overall achievement throughout Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory at best and in some cases unsatisfactory. The exceptions are art, history, business and music, where overall achievement is good, and sometimes very good. Achievement is unsatisfactory in science, ICT, design and technology, and physical education, and in English in Years 10 and 11. Reasons for this include: weak teaching skills, under-expectation of the more capable pupils, not enough variety of challenge for pupils of differing ability and also, in some cases, the effects of poor accommodation, and weak leadership.

6. Less capable pupils, including those few with particular special educational needs (SEN), achieve satisfactorily as a result of the increasingly effective arrangements for supporting these pupils. The school's analysis of results by ethnic group shows that pupils from minority ethnic groups are usually amongst the school's highest achievers. The achievement of the potentially highest attainers, however, is unsatisfactory overall. Although the highest 10 per cent of the school population have been identified as gifted or talented, provision for their needs has not yet been mapped across the curriculum, nor has funding been secured for enrichment activities to address their needs. With some notable exceptions, higher attaining pupils are not as well stretched as they ought to be in some subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Notable exceptions include history and art, where pupils themselves recognise that they are really expected to think, and where they say that they enjoy the challenge in those lessons.

Sixth Form

7. The picture is healthier in the Sixth Form, although the effects of the school's staffing and leadership problems have shown themselves there too in a recent decline in examination results. Results at A Level were above the national average in 2004, but they were further above in the previous two years. The most notable drop was in the proportion of entries gaining grades A and B. On the other hand, standards seen during the inspection give cause for hope that the decline is arrested. This is the result of effective and confident teaching from teachers who are secure in their chosen specialisms, teaching willing students with positive attitudes to learning. All of this is in the context of much more settled and effective whole school leadership, plus rapidly improving accommodation and resources.

Standards in GCE A/AS Level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	91.7 (96.1)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	27.3 (36.1)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	309.0 (306.5)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 67 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

8. Students achieve well and reach at least above average standards in almost every one of the seven A Level subjects reported in depth in Part C of this report. In art and psychology they achieve very well, due to very good teaching and very good leadership. In English, on the other hand, standards are average and achievement good, since students who choose this subject at A Level are not always those who achieve the highest grades at GCSE and numbers are comparatively low. Students are also achieving well in almost all of the wide range of other subjects sampled during the inspection (physics, biology, geography, government and politics, ancient history, sociology, music, media studies and sports studies). There are concerns about two subjects: design and technology and law.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are all good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Relationships are generally very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils like learning and are prepared to work hard when suitably challenged, but they can show some immature attitudes when bored.
- The school operates as an orderly, good-natured community.
- Pupils are supportive of each other and have a strong sense of fairness.
- The school is successful in encouraging pupils to think about events, and about their own and experiences and those of others, in a very moral manner.

Commentary

9. The pupils in this school relish learning and are quick to become enthused when they are presented with relevant, interesting activities. They generally listen well to what teachers have to say, enjoy discussing ideas and are happy to volunteer suggestions or an opinion. They co-operate well when working in pairs and are prepared to persevere when tussling with a problem or deciding what viewpoint to defend in a discussion. They generally set to their work with a will, putting genuine effort into what they write or draw or research, and taking care with their presentation. In some lessons where the teaching is pedantic, pupils' interest and general aptitude for work help them to make better progress than the quality of teaching warrants. However, these pupils have an acute understanding of what comprises good teaching and on occasion, when they do not find it, become disrespectful, reluctant to carry out tasks that they do not see the relevance of and, overall, get too little work done.

10. Pupils are suitably demanding in their expectations of what the school should provide, such as decent quality accommodation and permanent teachers rather than the succession of supply staff they have had in some subjects. At the same time they are proud to belong to their school and are delighted that, after a difficult period, it is beginning to improve. They praise the quality of many of their teachers and appreciate the openness and changes being brought about by the new leadership team. They are extraordinarily tolerant of some

highly unsatisfactory accommodation and move around the difficult site in an orderly manner. Pupils are polite, helpful and forthcoming, and usually behave in a mature manner. The new behaviour expectations are simple, clear and

generally put into consistent practice by staff, and both pupils and staff consider that behaviour has improved over recent months. The number of exclusions is relatively low, the reasons for them are entirely appropriate, and the sanction is highly effective, with only one boy in the last academic year being excluded for more than one, brief period.

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	645	23	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	5	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Chinese	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	7	0	0

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

11. From talking with many pupils it is clear that they feel that until recently they were not treated with respect as young adults. This has changed. A strong moral and social sense pervades the school, helping to create the harmonious community which is 'Team DGSB'. The code of conduct emphasises the need for reflection and awareness of others' needs as well as one's own. While recognising that name-calling and harassment do occur, none of the pupils with whom this was discussed considered that serious, persistent bullying now takes place in the school, and many pupils attest to the fact that staff deal with incidents swiftly and effectively. The quality of relationships is generally very good, with much mutual support among peers, between older and younger pupils, and between pupils and staff members. In subjects such as religious education, history and art, pupils learn in depth about the beliefs and culture of people different from themselves and produce high quality work which demonstrates the success of the school's efforts to broaden and enrich their levels of understanding. Their empathic writing about, for instance, Buddhism, the Renaissance, or disability shows a good spiritual and cultural awareness as well as strong feelings of morality and social justice. The school council is beginning again to play a significant role in the school's direction, recently debating, for instance, whether or not there should be prayer, or just reflection time, in assembly periods.

12. Attendance levels are significantly above the national average, with low levels of unauthorised absence. Over recent years, pupils' attendance has improved, and during the current term almost three-quarters of the pupils have attended for more than 95 per cent of possible time, which is unusually high. The attendance of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 is better than that of those in Years 10 and 11. The very great majority of pupils arrive punctually in the morning but the long distances that they often have to travel between classrooms, with no time allowance, mean that they lose many precious minutes of what are already short lesson periods.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (93.9%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.9	School data	0.2
National data	6.9	National data	1.14

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

Sixth Form

13. The attitudes and behaviour of Sixth Form students are very good overall, and these mature young men provide very good role models for the younger boys. There is a quiet self-confidence and creative initiative about the Sixth Formers, who are flourishing in the new atmosphere in which they can freely express their opinions. Prefects carry out their responsibilities with discretion and good humour. The chairman of the school council conducts proceedings in a focussed and democratic manner. The editor of the new student paper (first edition during inspection week) values contributions from pupils of all ages and has the courage to voice controversial opinions in a balanced manner. It is symptomatic of the school's new open attitude that, on the day after publication, a senior teacher was preparing to respond positively in assembly to the views expressed, seeing them as entirely valid. Older students were very negative in their response to the inspection questionnaire, clearly feeling that in the past they had been short-changed; such views are becoming a thing of the past.

14. Students also have very good attitudes towards their work. With few exceptions they are engaged and enthusiastic, taking a keen interest in their chosen subjects and showing mutual respect in discussions. They are helpful towards each other and positive in their evaluations and suggestions about each other's work. They are diligent in carrying out their independent study and thoughtful when considering, for instance, the paradox of the different value placed on water and diamonds. Opportunities for them to become involved in the wider community have diminished over recent years, but where they are re-emerging, as with Young Enterprise or Millennium Volunteers, students take part in a determined and purposeful manner.

15. Attendance levels in the Sixth Form are satisfactory but the daily registering of students is not carried out consistently, so a clear understanding of whether students are on or off the premises depends on their remembering to sign in and out.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides pupils with a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching and learning are better in the Sixth Form than in the main school. The school's curriculum needs improving in Years 10 and 11. Extra-curricular provision is not good enough. Accommodation and learning resources are unsatisfactory overall.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but good in the Sixth Form. Assessment overall is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge, but some do not prepare well enough for the spread of ability found in their classes.
- Teachers in too few subjects expect enough from the most capable pupils, or challenge them sufficiently.
- Students in the Sixth Form are well taught and learn well on the whole.
- Many subjects now have improved assessment procedures that are satisfactory overall, but there is still too much variety in the quality of practice across the school.

Commentary

16. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in the main school. They are good in geography, music and business studies, very good in history and art, but unsatisfactory in design and technology and ICT. This is similar to the situation when the school was last inspected.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 129 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
7 (5%)	31 (24%)	38 (29%)	43 (33%)	10 (8%)	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. Percentage figures may not total 100 because of rounding up or down.

17. Poor accommodation restricts the quality of teaching and learning in some subjects. The difficulty of recruiting and holding on to teachers of good quality has adversely affected quality in some other subjects. The variable quality of middle management is also significant. The better teaching and learning correlate closely with the more effective subject leadership. It is only very recently that teaching and learning have been monitored and evaluated rigorously enough to enliven the less than sparkling teaching seen in some areas of the school.

18. The better teaching, in art, history, music, business studies and geography, is notable for its pace and for high expectations of what every pupil is capable of. In these lessons there is variety of activity, and pupils are actively involved in their own learning rather than in passively absorbing information. The pupils have to do things, think, discuss, solve problems, question or defend a point of view. The learning and the achievement in these lessons are, in consequence, at least good. The progress pupils make is noticeable. They know more, understand more or are better at something than they were at the start of the lesson. The lessons have sharp and interesting beginnings, with meat in the middle, and they have their threads pulled together well near the end. If homework is set, it is relevant to the topic, interesting and challenging to do. No one's attention wanders. No pupil is 'underwhelmed' and allowed to coast. In an art lesson, for instance, some pupils were able to make links with other areas of knowledge because of the resources provided and the opportunities offered. With just a tiny amount of knowledge of Greek and Russian, one Year 8 pupil applied his mind to a Russian constructivist painting and worked out that the words the artist had incorporated into the painting translated as 'blue towel'. Only afterwards did he learn from the teacher that this abstract work was based on a laundry scene. In a Year 10 history lesson on America in the 1920s, the teacher's high expectations were reflected in challenging tasks and activities, accompanied by a high level of comment and discourse.

19. The less good, and in some cases unsatisfactory, teaching in ICT, design and technology, and in some other lessons, is notable for the lack of many of the attributes listed above. The lesson beginnings go on too long. The middles are not interesting enough. The endings just fizzle out with a comment such as, 'We will continue this next time.' The pace is too slow for some pupils; others are not kept sufficiently on task. Standards expected in some lessons are too low. Marking is irregular and pupils do not receive enough feedback on how to improve their work. As a result, the learning in these lessons is not good enough, and the progress made is less than it should be. In an ICT lesson in Year 7, for example, instructions were unclear, and the work over-prescriptive and unchallenging. The result was too many pupils off task and aimlessly surfing the Internet. In one Year 8 science lesson, pupils investigating the properties of metals were neither

challenged to devise suitable experiments nor expected to find patterns among data. Instead, the teacher supplied all the information, reducing their sense of involvement and missing opportunities to teach skills of data analysis.

20. With notable exceptions, particularly in art and history, teachers are not catering effectively for the spread of ability in some classes. Less capable pupils are often taught satisfactorily and consequently achieve satisfactorily, especially when they are able to benefit from the opportunity to work with a teaching assistant. In a Year 8 design and technology lesson, for example, a group of uninterested boys turned into a very effective design team because of the encouragement and interest of the teaching assistant supporting the lesson. The teaching assistants are well qualified, experienced and caring. They are frustrated, however, because teachers do not always share planning with them in advance. The achievement of the most capable pupils is unsatisfactory overall. In too many lessons seen, across too many subjects, including English, mathematics and science, pupils were not challenged sufficiently. Classroom teachers ensure that pupils for whom English is a second language are as well helped to reach their full potential as other pupils. They recognise areas of difficulty and help pupils to overcome them. These pupils are often amongst the highest achievers in the school.

Assessment in the main school

21. Assessment overall is satisfactory. The school's draft assessment policy is supported by a comprehensive database containing information on individual pupils. The school makes good use of the data by sharing it with staff and providing training to help them understand how it can be analysed and used. There is increasing consistency of assessment practice across the school, with good practice in art, history, geography, languages and business education. Unsatisfactory practice was noted in technology, where marking is insufficient, and in citizenship, where no procedures are in place. School data includes detailed information on pupils' performance in national tests, and other indicators. More recently, the school is categorising the data to identify pupils with SEN and those who are gifted or talented. Teachers use available information for report writing and setting targets, although some of the reports are too general and do not give a flavour of the subject, concentrating too much instead on attitudes and behaviour. Target setting is still under development. Individual pupils are given targets but little guidance on how to achieve them.

Sixth Form

22. The quality of teaching and learning is better in the Sixth Form than in the main school. The specialisms of staff come to the fore in their Sixth Form teaching. Teachers have very secure command of their subjects, and students in the Sixth Form are more eager to learn than they are in the main school. In all but eight of the 42 lessons seen, the quality of teaching and learning was at least good. In more than one third it was at least very good, and four lessons were excellent. These latter were in geography, government and politics, art and design and English. There is a marked difference in the degree of expectation and challenge of Sixth Form students compared to that for pupils in the main school.

23. Assessment is also satisfactory in the Sixth Form. Use of available assessment information in the Sixth Form for report writing and setting targets is satisfactory. Students have a good awareness of their subject targets, though sometimes less idea of how to achieve them.

The curriculum

The school's curriculum, along with extra curricular provision, is barely satisfactory. Accommodation and learning resources are unsatisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curricular provision in art and history is very good; fieldwork in geography is a strength.
- Work-related learning (WRL) is not yet fully co-ordinated and work in design and technology is not always up to date and relevant.
- The school does not meet the requirements either for a daily act of collective worship or for the provision of religious education in the Sixth Form.
- There are relatively few extra-curricular activities to enrich the curriculum, either in the main school or in the Sixth Form.

Commentary

24. The breadth and balance of the curriculum is satisfactory overall but with areas for improvement. Few courses reflect the world of work or have accreditation other than GCSE. The time allocated for ICT in Year 11 is inadequate for the full-course GCSE. Some pupils in Years 10 – 11 in physical education have only one lesson of 50 minutes, which also covers changing time. Long-term planning in design and technology is weak. The pattern of two separate 50-minute lessons in design and technology breaks the flow of pupils' learning. Curricular provision is very good in Years 7 – 11 in art and history. There are regular and well planned opportunities for fieldwork in geography.

25. The school meets statutory requirements in all subjects in Years 7 – 11. The statutory requirement to teach religious education in the Sixth Form is not met. The requirement for all pupils in Years 7 – 11 to experience a daily act of collective worship is also not met. The time taken travelling from one lesson to another means that many lessons do not start on time.

26. The quality of provision to prepare pupils in the main school for the next stage of education or employment is satisfactory. Much of it is delivered through a satisfactory personal, health and social education (PSHE) programme, with some good input from *Connexions* staff in Year 11. All pupils take part in a useful programme of work experience for one week in Year 10. The provision for WRL is not yet fully embedded in the curriculum. The school has identified WRL opportunities across all subjects and these are reflected in the schemes of work in most departments, but the issue is not yet fully monitored or co-ordinated. Pupils are able to experience the world of work in useful visits to a local scientific firm and to the ICT department of a world-renowned company.

27. Extra-curricular provision is barely satisfactory overall, although good in ICT. Duke of Edinburgh and Combined Cadet Corps activities take place regularly, and there are some educational trips and visits. Musical activities and extra language sessions were praised by pupils. Pupils spoke of sports activities, but only for those who are good enough to play for a team. They told inspectors that they would welcome more activities at lunchtimes.

28. In general, teachers are well qualified, with good subject knowledge. However, recruitment problems have beset some departments, in particular ICT, science and physical education. Other departments, such as art and design, modern foreign languages and design and technology, have suffered long-term sickness of teachers. The result in most cases has been disruption of the continuity of teaching and learning, sometimes leading to unsatisfactory achievement and lowered standards.

29. Learning resources are unsatisfactory overall, although they have recently improved in some subjects. For example, in most subjects there is now a good range of appropriate textbooks and these are well used. The very well managed and comprehensive library is also well used by the pupils. The main shortcomings are in ICT. Learning through the use of ICT is weak in most subjects and is an area for much development. In some departments, such as design and technology, much of the equipment is dated and pupils' understanding of new technology and modern materials is limited. The school also makes too little use of visits and visitors to augment the available resources.

30. Despite much-needed recent improvements, the accommodation remains unsatisfactory overall, and in some cases it has a negative effect on standards and the quality of learning. The buildings show signs of poor maintenance, and insufficient improvements have been made to almost all of the subject areas highlighted in the previous inspection. For example, the lack of storage space in art continues to inhibit the range of work that pupils are encouraged to develop. The science laboratories lack ICT facilities and

have problems with their gas supply. The practice rooms for music are isolated from the main teaching area. The range of facilities for physical education is poor, and leads to underachievement. Pupils benefit from several grass areas, though the school has no hard courts or all-weather surfaces. Indoor teaching is limited to a small gymnasium, which is undergoing refurbishment and was not used during the inspection. The current development of the very poor changing rooms caused difficulties during the inspection.

Sixth Form

31. The school offers a fairly wide and tried and tested academic curriculum in the Sixth Form, which blends well the traditional curriculum of Latin, ancient history, English, arts, sciences, modern foreign languages and humanities, with business studies, government and politics, economics, philosophy, psychology and sports studies. Consortium arrangements with nearby Sixth Forms are increasingly effective in widening opportunities for individual students. For instance, theatre studies are taken at the Girls' Grammar School. Media studies were introduced two years ago and are now an established subject. Information and communication technology (ICT) is offered as an advanced vocational certificate of education. Students do get involved as prefects, school librarians, or in working with some primary schools, but apart from sports activities there is little else to enrich their educational experience.

Care, guidance and support

The school's care, guidance and support for its pupils are satisfactory. It now involves them well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The recent arrival of the learning mentor and the introduction of the learning centre have greatly strengthened the school's pastoral provision.
- While the school complies with statutory requirements concerning health and safety, the state of the accommodation continues to hinder effective learning and progress in physical education.
- Pupils receive helpful advice about how to improve their work, but older students feel less well supported when deciding which higher education avenues to follow after leaving school.
- Pupils' opinions are beginning to have a big impact on the life of the school.

Commentary

32. Pupils, parents and many staff members are full of praise for the work of the learning mentor, who joined the school in the most recent summer term but has taken on this role only since September. With his calm, authoritative presence and considerable interpersonal skills, he skilfully combines behaviour management with individual support for pupils, thus making a significant contribution to the well being of all those connected with the school. The learning centre is also very new, but the teaching assistants who are based here work well with the learning mentor to nurture those who are finding the demands of school life too difficult to cope with, and support them in their return to an ordinary timetable.

33. Other recent improvements to the organisation of support for pupils have built on the successful system of form tutors and heads of key stage, and many pupils now consider that they are well cared for. The extension of form periods means that tutors have more

time to get to know the pupils in their care. This extra time has great potential, though, as yet, the use they make of these periods varies in quality. The student services manager gets to know individual pupils very well and treats them with a suitable balance of briskness and concern. Access to a counsellor and the training of Sixth Form students as mentors to younger pupils add further strength to the provision, and long-standing good arrangements help Year 7 pupils to settle swiftly into grammar school life. The introduction of regular target-setting meetings, and the provision of graphs against which pupils can chart their progress towards their 'Minimum Achievement Challenge', means that pupils are now beginning to have a well-focused understanding of their academic strengths and areas for improvement.

34. At the time of the previous inspection, many hazards to health and safety were identified and their elimination was a key issue for action. The school has taken satisfactory action to improve matters. There is a senior manager with responsibility for this aspect, and a clear policy in place. Regular risk assessments are now being carried out and some urgent work undertaken, such as repairs to roofing and installation of safe external steps. Further work is underway but the lack of maintenance from which the school has suffered for many years means that the work is taking some time to complete, particularly in physical education. The school is now receiving strong support from the local authority to remedy matters. Improvements have also been made to the child protection procedures but there is a need, acknowledged by the school, for all staff members to be alert to unhappiness and clear about what action to take should they have concerns about a pupil's welfare.

35. Among the pupils' most negative responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire was their feeling that their views were not taken into account. This may have been true of the past but is no longer the case. The school council meets regularly, debates real issues, has a budget and takes decisions that affect the school's provision. Members are currently devising a new dinner menu and coming up with ideas for sanctions and rewards which would be seen as relevant and effective. The council formed an important part of the decision-making body when appointing the new headteacher, who has done so much in a short time to improve the quality of education provided by the school.

Sixth Form

36. Many of the improvements in the care and support of younger pupils, outlined above, apply equally to Sixth Form students. They have a stronger voice in school affairs, and regular guidance from subject teachers about how to improve their work. A suitable induction programme helps Year 12 students settle into Sixth Form life, with good advice on the development of individual study skills, and good access to different means of research.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnerships with parents, other schools and the wider community are all satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is working hard to engage parents in partnership, and they are welcoming the new spirit of openness and care for their sons.
- The school is building on its community partnerships to broaden its provision in exciting ways.
- Close working with others in the Sixth Form consortium enhances the opportunities available to students.

Commentary

37. Around two thirds of those parents who returned completed questionnaires included some features of disagreement with the positively worded statements, and almost half of them made additional, written comments. Many of these, while acknowledging the quality of individual staff members, expressed anger and sadness at their sons' former experiences at the school, including low examination results, high teacher turnover and poor behaviour. Over the past year the school has introduced many activities to help parents become better informed about its life, the content of the curriculum, and their sons' progress. Responses to the school's own surveys conducted at these meetings show that parents are appreciative of the changes they are beginning to see in, for instance, the expectations of both staff and pupils and the friendly, professional approach. Regular target-setting information and messages in pupils' planners keep parents abreast of their sons' standards of attainment. The school has firm plans to improve the quality of written reports, which, while they comply with requirements, currently include very little detailed subject-specific information. Parents are very supportive of their sons' education and raise helpful extra funds through the activities of the committed Parents and Friends Association.

38. Some departments, such as art, have strong links with the wider community which enhance the provision for pupils. Working relationships with the local authority are now very productive. The Education Business Partnership supports pupils on work experience, and the Cadet Corps is based at the school. However, rapidly increasing links with members of the community are the backbone of future development plans. Already, work with English Heritage and the Kent Countryside Project has highlighted the potential for much greater community involvement, in a project to develop the Whinlass Down area behind the school as an exciting resource for every subject area. The catalyst behind the project is the school's bid to become a specialist business and enterprise college, but even should that not come to pass the community project is sufficiently far advanced to remain a firm feature of its provision.

Sixth Form

39. While there are some relationships with primary colleagues, the strongest partnership with other schools is through the Sixth Form consortium. This allows students access to a far greater range of subjects than would be possible if the school were working in isolation. Closest links are with the Girls' Grammar School, with daily movement of students between sites. Features such as a jointly planned timetable provide a flexibility of provision which benefits all students. Sixth Formers also gain from the growing and increasingly effective links with local companies, especially in relation to science and business studies.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are all satisfactory overall. The leadership of the new headteacher and new senior team is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new headteacher and her effective new leadership team are turning the school around and dramatically improving it.
- The governing body is now providing a satisfactory blend of helpful support and constructive challenge to the school's leadership team, an improvement since the previous inspection.

- The leadership and management of subjects, though strong in some cases, is not yet consistently good enough.

Commentary

40. The previous Ofsted inspection in 1999 criticised aspects of the school's leadership for not having a strong enough focus on raising standards. Three years later, in 2002, a local education authority review team concluded that there had been insufficient progress with the key issues for action left by the Ofsted inspectors, and the school was made a cause for concern. Some of those issues are still there, in 2004, but the rate at which they are being tackled has speeded up.

41. Leadership is now satisfactory overall. The leadership of the new headteacher and her equally new senior colleagues is better than this. Working so well together, this increasingly effective team is building skilfully upon the start made by last year's interim headship and is turning the school around and steering it in the right direction. Calm optimism, linked to steadfast determination and crystal clear objectives, typify the way the school is now led. Mutual respect, backed up with high expectations of every single person who works or learns there, is the other key factor in the turnaround.

42. Governance is now satisfactory. Governors were criticised in 1999 for not always providing rigorous enough support for senior management. They are now kept better informed than they were, and are more aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school than they used to be. Apart from failing to ensure that there is a daily act of collective worship and that religious education is offered to all pupils in the Sixth Form, they now make sure that the school fulfils its statutory duties.

43. Management is satisfactory. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, because of effective teamwork from dedicated non-teaching as well as teaching staff. The current whole-school improvement plan addresses all the issues that previous ones are said not to have done. It does so in a clear, easy-to-follow manner, with dates and costings, success criteria and personal responsibility. Departmental management plans, which were criticised previously as less good than the whole-school plans, now contain frank and helpful self-assessments of what needs to be done in each subject area. Accommodation problems are not allowed to detract from the increasing

morale and sense of teamwork developing in the school. The steady improvements to the environment help in this respect. Recent improvements to parts of the building are noticeable, and some classrooms have lately been transformed by removing dirty carpets and curtains and renovating the original wooden floors.

44. Subject leadership is satisfactory overall but still too variable in its quality and effectiveness from subject to subject. It is very good in history and art; good in business, geography, religious education, modern foreign languages and music; satisfactory in English, science, ICT, citizenship and physical education; but unsatisfactory in design and technology. Heads of departments are more involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of their colleagues than they used to be, but some are more effective than others at this task. Subject leaders in science, modern foreign languages and ICT have been struggling against the odds to recruit and hold on to staff of quality, and this has had detrimental effects upon standards. Pastoral leadership and management are improving. The provision of only two assemblies each week for each year group is allowing form tutors to spend more productive time with their form groups.

45. The new senior leadership group has focused appropriately on teaching and learning as the central issue in school improvement, and the lessons seen during the inspection confirm that there is a wide range of teaching quality and much work to be done to spread the very good and excellent practice more widely through the school. A line management structure now links each head of department to the senior leadership group and middle managers are at last fully involved in departmental decisions such as the appointment of subject staff. A stronger team spirit is developing among teachers and support staff at all levels.

46. The co-ordination of the provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory overall, but provision for pupils identified as either gifted or talented is at an early stage of development.

Financial information

47. Until recently, managers and governors have had little clarity about the state of the school's finances. With the help of good, internal expertise and of support from the local authority, the situation has changed. Although the school has a backlog of poor maintenance and under-resourcing of departments, and is currently operating with a deficit budget, its financial management is now on a sound footing. Development planning is closely aligned to financial planning; decision-making and accountability are open; expenditure is based on educational gains; and there is close monitoring of what is spent. The school is well led and its management is satisfactory; there is a positive atmosphere in the school and a realistic optimism for the future. Pupils are now receiving a satisfactory quality of education. They are achieving standards that are above the national average but not as high as they should be when compared to those of similar schools; hence, overall achievement in the main school is unsatisfactory. When all these indicators are taken into consideration, especially the latter, the school cannot be said, at present, to be providing satisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,544,866.00
Total expenditure	2,566,193.00
Expenditure per pupil	3,708.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	- 29,873.00
Balance carried forward to the next	- 51,200.00

Sixth Form

48. The leadership and management of the Sixth Form are satisfactory overall, strong in some respects, but not as forward looking, effective and dynamic as necessary. For instance, great care is taken to interview and induct students into Year 12 and to prepare Year 13 students as a group for university entrance. However, Year 13 students are concerned that personal advice about their own individual higher education options is difficult to find, and that what is available is not helpful enough. Relationships with teachers and tutors are good. The leadership and management of the Sixth Form have recently been strengthened by the appointment of an experienced head of department as assistant head of Sixth Form.

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 **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are above the national average.
- There is much good and very good teaching, so that learning is good in these lessons.
- Some of the most capable pupils underachieve because teaching does not stretch them fully, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

49. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 and above was very high when compared with the national average, but average when measured against similar schools and the pupils' earlier achievement. In 2004, results fell a little, especially the number of those attaining the highest grades. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 was above average but showing signs of improvement, attributable to new programmes of work reflecting the national literacy strategy for this age group. Achievement of all groups of pupils at the end of Year 9 is satisfactory.

50. Results in English in the 2003 GCSE examination were well above the national average, but they fell significantly in 2004, particularly in the number of pupils achieving the highest levels. English Literature results were above average in 2003, but also fell in 2004, with a lower percentage of the higher grades. At this level, too, inspection evidence indicates that standards are above the national average in English and in English Literature, but are not high enough in the proportion of the higher grades attained. Achievement is unsatisfactory when compared with pupils' standards when they were in Year 9.

51. Pupils are very ready to contribute orally in lessons, to express their views and to answer teachers' questions. Their oral skills are good. Their oral work, however, is not always well structured or tailored to a sense of purpose or audience. Some drama, which would assist these skills, is incorporated in the English curriculum, but discrete drama lessons are no longer taught in the school, because of lack of accommodation. Reading skills are good; pupils read fluently and with good comprehension of what they read. Writing is satisfactory overall. It is usually good in content, but limited by technical weaknesses of spelling, grammar and punctuation, which inhibit clear expression of pupils' ideas.

52. The overall quality of teaching and learning, though ranging between good and excellent in many lessons, is satisfactory overall. This mixed picture stems from a discrepancy between those teachers who have high expectations of these high attaining

pupils, and provide them with work which challenges them to reach their full potential, and those who do not have sufficiently high expectations, especially of the most capable pupils and particularly in Years 10 and 11. There is some good and very good teaching in all years. Lessons are well planned, incorporating the national literacy strategy well, and using a wide range of approaches and methods. Teachers use questioning skilfully to assess pupils' learning and to help them to articulate their ideas, and the pace of lessons is brisk and energetic. Pupils with SEN and those for whom English is an additional language are well supported by their teachers. In less successful lessons, assessment of pupils' work is not put to good use in the provision of work which is suitably graded to meet the needs of all pupils. Pace is often too slow to extend pupils to their full potential. Marking is inconsistent from teacher to teacher. At its best, it is constructive and sets targets for improvement; however, this is not always the case.

53. The subject co-ordinator provides the department with a very good role model for teaching English and English Literature. However, he has a very heavy teaching programme, and he directs media studies as well as English. Consequently he has too little time to give better than satisfactory leadership and management. There is not enough monitoring of teaching to build an effective team of teachers who use the same approach to lesson planning and who share the co-ordinator's high aspirations for these very able pupils. Moreover, pupils' work is too seldom monitored to ensure that all pupils are fully stretched by all teachers. Although long-term planning has recently improved with the introduction of new schemes of work, there is a need for the spreading of good teaching practice throughout the department, so that all pupils are sure to receive the good teaching they deserve. The use of ICT is rapidly improving with better access to computers.

54. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall, despite GCSE results having fallen since then. The department has recently shown clear signs of changing for the better. Factors related to this are the use of the literacy strategy, the innovation of intervention classes, the new programmes of study, and the early stages of a move towards more monitoring and analysis of pupils' performance.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Standards of literacy are generally above average. Pupils are articulate. They listen well to teachers. Reading is generally fluent, often with a good level of comprehension. Some good practice is evident in some subjects, particularly geography and art, in the form of word banks, and there has been some training for teachers in the use of different types of text. However, progress has not been as rapid as it might have been. In most subjects, writing still often lacks an appropriate sense of audience and contains many inaccuracies of spelling, punctuation and grammar, as well as much over-colloquialism, all of which hamper pupils' expression of ideas in coursework and in examinations. There is also a tendency for teachers not to correct mistakes, so that they are constantly repeated. The school is aware of the need for a whole-school literacy strategy and has begun to take steps to ensure that all curriculum areas are involved in the process of raising standards of literacy.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resilient leadership is helping the department to emerge from a difficult period.
- Standards are not high enough in French in GCSE.

- Teaching and learning across the department are now better than they have been in recent years.
- The department contributes well to pupils' cultural development.

Commentary

56. GCSE examination results at grades A*-C in 2004 in French and German were well above the national average, but slightly below those of the previous year. The results were below those for similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining A* or A in French was low. Staffing issues during the year adversely affected pupils' progress and continuity.

57. Pupils' current standards of attainment in French in Years 7 – 9 are in line with the nationally expected standards. Pupils' understanding of the foreign language is sound and their pronunciation is at least satisfactory. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 write at length and use different tenses, but much of the writing is not accurate enough. For example, the accents are omitted. Pupils used to begin German in Year 8, but the subject has now moved to Year 7, and all pupils study French, German and Latin but with reduced curricular time for each of the three languages. All pupils achieve satisfactorily at this stage. Over time, they acquire a good knowledge of vocabulary and grounding in grammar.

58. Year 11 pupils were engaged in examinations during the inspection. Limited evidence shows that they are above average in understanding and reading. The written coursework that was scrutinised in French and German was of a good standard. Pupils write accurately, using different tenses and a range of vocabulary and constructions. The achievement of all pupils is satisfactory.

59. Teaching and learning in French and German are satisfactory, with some good features. Three of the four teachers are native French speakers, although one of these was on sick leave during the inspection. Most teachers use the foreign language well. Lessons are planned well, with different activities and skills, although assessment cards are used by only one teacher. Occasionally, starters are too long or evaluation at the end of the lesson is not crisp enough. Resources are used well, and teachers set homework regularly. Some of the marking is irregular and lacks rigour. Pupils' attitudes are good, but there is room for improvement in the presentation of written work. Relationships are good.

60. Leadership is good. The subject leader provides clear educational direction for the department, even, at one stage, to the extent of producing lesson plans for the whole department to aid consistency. Management is satisfactory and is impeded by recent staffing issues and the lack of an office. Regular contact with native speakers, visits abroad, and the use of foreign language assistants in classes all contribute well to pupils' cultural development. Opportunities for using ICT are limited, and more textbooks and dictionaries are needed. Improvement since the last inspection, in difficult circumstances, has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high in Year 9, representing good achievement when compared with pupils' previous attainment on entry to the school.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and their positive and productive relationships with pupils are very good.
- Teachers do not do enough to provide for the spread of ability in some classes, and some of the more able pupils are not challenged enough.

Commentary

61. The national test results for Year 9 in 2004 were very high in comparison with national averages, and were in line with those of similar schools. On the evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 9 are also very high. For instance, in Year 9, all pupils have a good understanding of trial and improvement methods

and make good use of algebra. Higher attaining pupils can interpret cumulative frequency curves and solve algebraic fractions. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is therefore good when compared to standards on entry to the school.

62. The Year 11 GCSE examination results in 2004 were well above national averages but well below the average for similar schools. Problems with syllabus cover and coursework were some of the reasons for this. Standards observed in most lessons, in pupils' written work, and in the mock examination scripts completed during the inspection, show that present standards are much closer to those expected from pupils in a selective school. Although in one or two lessons the degree of challenge and the progress being made by the most capable pupils was less than it could have been, achievement overall is judged satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

63. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lesson planning is very detailed. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and enjoy positive, productive relationships with pupils. Behaviour is generally well managed. However, teachers do not plan for the spread of ability in classes, treating the pupils too much as homogeneous groups. This means that some pupils, usually the most capable ones, are not sufficiently challenged with more demanding work. Marking is regular and pupils have a good idea of their targets. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. Learning and achievement benefit accordingly.

64. The curriculum in mathematics is broad and balanced, with an appropriate emphasis given to the National Strategy in Years 7 to 9. The provision for ICT within the department is satisfactory, although access is inconsistent across teaching groups. Opportunities for making use of the Internet are underdeveloped. The provision for literacy is satisfactory; subject-specific words are highlighted in lesson planning but not sufficiently stressed and developed in the teaching.

65. The department has suffered from difficulties in recruiting suitable staff. The majority of the present staff have experienced recent and relevant professional development. Rooms provide a welcoming atmosphere with displays of pupils' work, but teaching rooms are spread over three buildings. The department is suitably resourced in terms of equipment and textbooks.

66. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a good team ethos within the department and a renewed intention to effect improvement. The head of department has a good awareness of the strengths of the department, and monitoring is beginning to show sufficient rigour to identify and act upon weaknesses. Departmental documentation is brief for Years 10 and 11 but schemes of work have been improved for Years 7 to 9.

67. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Although results remain similar to those reported in the last inspection, there have been improvements in assessment and pupils' calculation skills, as well as in the leadership and management of the department.

Mathematics across the curriculum

68. Numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. All in all, pupils' command of number is sufficient to support the mathematical demands made by other subjects. Number work is developed well in science and music. Algebraic skills are used well in business education for spreadsheet formulae in stock control, as well as for substitution in formulae to calculate average speed and acceleration in science. There was less evidence of the use of spreadsheets in ICT, so numeracy is underrepresented there. Spatial awareness is used across the curriculum, including measuring in technology and tessellations and pattern in art. Graphs are used well in history for drawing population graphs and, in geography, for drawing pie charts, bar charts and graphs.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test and examination results are much too low in comparison with those of similar schools.
- Teachers' expectations are too low and the most capable pupils, in particular, are underachieving.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff are working well together and the department is improving.
- Marking varies in standard. Some is frequent, informative, thoughtful and encouraging
- Information and communication technology (ICT) resources are inadequate.

Commentary

69. Results in Year 9 national tests in 2004 were well above the national average but well below those in comparable schools. This has been the pattern for five years, during which the school's results have scarcely improved despite a rising trend nationally. Similarly, GCSE results in 2003 were well above national averages but below those attained by pupils in comparable schools. Moreover, pupils in this school achieved half a grade less in science than they averaged in their other subjects. The 2004 GCSE results showed a considerable decline. There was a sharp fall in the numbers of A*-C grades and pupils achieved less, on average, than grade C. This is well below the standards achieved in comparable schools.

70. Achievement in lessons is unsatisfactory. Although standards are higher than in schools nationally, reflecting the selective intake, the more capable pupils achieve much less than they should. This is a consequence of teaching which does not always make best use of their time and often provides too little challenge. For example, in one Year 8 lesson, pupils were investigating the properties of metals. They were neither challenged to devise suitable experiments nor expected to find patterns among data. Instead, the teacher supplied all the information, reducing their sense of involvement and missing opportunities to teach data analysis skills.

71. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall, and teachers' subject knowledge is sound. In recent years this has not always been so. The quality of work seen reflects not only pupils' generally positive attitudes but also a difference in effectiveness between teachers. Some lessons are well constructed, display a variety of teaching styles, and engage pupils effectively throughout. In too many, however, expectations are too low. The paucity of ICT resources is a serious problem which prevents staff from using readily available material to stimulate understanding of scientific ideas. Marking varies in standard. Some is frequent, informative, thoughtful and encouraging; it enables pupils both to know their current level of attainment and to understand how to improve it. Marking by other teachers, however, is unhelpful. It consists merely of ticks and perfunctory comments. In some cases books do not appear to have been marked at all since September.

72. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There have been substantial recruitment problems in the last few years, which the head of department has dealt with as effectively as possible. Several teachers are new to the department and a strong, mutually supportive team is now evolving, well supported by the technicians, who are loyal, well qualified and effective. The system for tracking progress in pupils' learning, when fully in place, should be a real asset in improving learning. However, effective programmes for monitoring teaching and marking are still to be developed.

73. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Although health and safety problems have been effectively tackled, examination results have not improved. Moreover, issues about the lack of ICT and the concern that teaching provides too little opportunity for pupils to use their initiative have been outstanding since the inspection of ten years ago.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are too low and achievement is unsatisfactory.
- The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- The subject is not allocated enough curriculum time in Year 11, and a lack of ICT resources denies pupils learning opportunities in many subjects.
- Although leadership is satisfactory, management is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

74. There were no GCSE entries in ICT in 2004. In previous years pupils gained very high standards in GCSE.

75. For current Year 11 pupils, standards are average. The work in word processing and slide production is above average. Pupils can write forms to gather information for a database, but skills in retrieving data are less well developed. Skills in many other areas are rudimentary. Overall, standards are below expectations and achievement is unsatisfactory. This is because in the past pupils have been taught too often by unqualified teachers. Additionally, the time given to the GCSE course leads to only superficial coverage of some topics.

76. Overall, standards are below expectations and achievement is unsatisfactory. In Year 9, standards are average. Pupils have an above average understanding of how to construct a web site. They can add hyperlinks but cannot fine-tune their web pages, using computer code. Pupils use appropriate text and graphics when they produce slide shows, and use colour effectively, but they cannot scan images for inclusion. Standards in many other ICT areas are below average because pupils have not covered the work to sufficient depth. This is because in the past pupils have been taught by unqualified teachers and some current teaching is also unsatisfactory. Achievement of those with SEN and of gifted and talented pupils is also unsatisfactory because different work is not planned for them.

77. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. While in many classes learning is satisfactory, in a significant minority the standards expected from pupils are too low. These lessons lack challenge and interest and fail to grasp pupils' imagination. The pace of work is too slow. In the better lessons, pupils enjoy the challenging tasks set by the teacher, and learning is directed by clear objectives. All lessons create a good balance between theory and practical learning.

78. Leadership is satisfactory and holds a clear vision of a school in which ICT widely supports learning. This vision requires an expansion of resources, and the recently appointed systems manager has already made a significant contribution by building new computers and developing an on-line curriculum. Management is unsatisfactory.

Monitoring lacks precision, and plans to raise standards of learning are not robust. Assessment is satisfactory.

79. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. The school now teaches the National Curriculum. However, standards across the school have fallen. A significant proportion of teaching remains unsatisfactory. There are still too few opportunities to use computers in other subjects.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

80. Provision is unsatisfactory. The school does not currently have a coherent plan for the use of the computer facilities by all subjects across the curriculum. As a result, pupils have too few opportunities to practise and develop the skills they have learned in their ICT lessons. The new school management is actively addressing this shortcoming and intends that computers be widely used across all subjects. Some good use was seen. In history, pupils used scanned pictures of relatives when word processing their family trees. In business education, pupils use spreadsheets well to model financial decisions. On the other hand, in science, art, design and technology, music and physical education, there is not enough use of computers to support learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards achieved at GCSE in 2003 were well above the national average for all schools but below those for similar schools.
- Achievement has improved since 2003 and is now satisfactory overall.
- Energetic and imaginative teaching promotes good understanding of complex geographical issues.
- Some lessons in the new scheme of work for years 7 to 9 contain too much material to be covered in the time available.
- The positive attitudes of pupils and the commitment of staff are raising aspirations.

Commentary

81. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above national expectations, with 100 per cent of pupils reaching Level 5 or higher in the last three years. This represents good achievement because many pupils enter the school with underdeveloped geographical skills.

82. GCSE results in 2003 were above the national average and were further above in 2004, though still below the average for similar schools. The department has responded well to this underachievement as compared with similar schools. For example, there has been more systematic sharing of mark schemes with pupils. Work seen during the inspection indicates further improvements, and achievement by Year 11 is now judged satisfactory.

83. Teaching is good overall and is often very good. It is predominantly energetic and imaginative and builds very good relationships with pupils. This secures good progress and supports more able pupils and those with SEN. A new scheme of work in Years 7 – 9 promotes problem solving. Pupils apply their learning to local and wider issues, for example the impact of housing developments at Ashford. Use of questioning is very good and develops understanding. One effective sequence helped a Year 8 class to reach a detailed understanding of climatic factors. There are regular and well planned opportunities for fieldwork. Homework is set regularly and contains tasks matched to individual learning needs. Sometimes, too much is attempted in 50-minute lessons. Whilst all pupils try very hard, a few find the pace too fast and their learning can be superficial. The impact of this is greater in Year 9, where allocation of a single weekly lesson leaves little flexibility to repeat content. Very good teacher/pupil relationships support good achievement and encourage pupils to achieve higher grades. Marking is detailed and provides pupils with advice on how to improve. Encouraging pupils to assess each other's work is helping to increase understanding of GCSE grades. Teachers' comments on links with National Curriculum Levels in Years 7 – 9 are less systematic and some pupils are unsure how to improve. Although good classroom support is available in some lessons, some pupils in Years 7/8 are slow to scan text for information. The department recognises this as an issue.

84. Leadership and management are good. Analysis of results has identified and resolved causes of underperformance, and teachers regularly compare lesson techniques. The still developing scheme of work reflects recent developments in the subject and the teachers review materials and teaching styles very regularly. The department is well resourced and every pupil has his own textbook. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Lack of access to computers in classrooms restricts the range of teaching and learning opportunities.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are significantly above national averages.
- Teaching is consistently very good because it captures and holds pupils' interest, engages their minds and results in work of high standard.
- Leadership and management are very good; history has been made enjoyable, challenging and popular.
- Pupils enjoy history because it captures their interest and makes them think.

Commentary

85. By Year 9, standards are well above national expectations when compared to those of all schools. The GCSE results in 2004 are significantly above national averages, reflecting those of 2003 and much improved on those of 2002. All pupils are achieving very well in history. More pupils are achieving grades A*-C than they did in 2003, and grade B is now the average GCSE grade for history in this school.

86. In the work seen and in lessons observed, pupils' achievement was very good because the very good teaching in the department captured the pupils' interest, engaged

their minds and enabled them to produce work of high standard. In a very good introductory lesson in Year 10 on America in the 1920s, the teacher's high expectations were reflected in challenging tasks and activities, accompanied by a high level of comment and discourse. This enabled above average pupils to identify and comment on the main themes of the era. Pupils brought to the lesson a very good understanding of history and this enabled them to link aspects of the 1920s to a wider historical context. This, in turn, reflected the very good teaching evident in other years. Pupils' written work is of high quality, whether it be notes or longer pieces of writing.

87. Teaching and learning are consistently very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and very good relationships with pupils. They all use a variety of teaching and learning methods which involve pupils very actively in learning. Lessons have a brisk pace and the demands made on pupils do challenge them. Year 9 pupils, studying the growth of the British Empire, had to complete a succession of tasks on some very difficult sources. They did this very well. In a Year 7 lesson on Roman Britain, pupils looked at some artefacts. Not only did they identify them, but they were able to make significant deductions about the life and skills of the Romans. Pupils like history. It makes them think, and the attention to detail brings history alive for them. Teaching is very skilled in drawing inferences and deductions together to form conclusions about the past based firmly on evidence. As a result, pupils develop a very good understanding of historical skills.

88. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has been in post for three years and has seen results at GCSE rise over this period. His vision, determination and leadership have made learning history enjoyable, challenging and popular. The other history teachers share the same high level of knowledge, skills and relationships. All teachers use the available technology very well to enhance their lessons. Marking is very good. The quality of assessment overall is good and is developing well. The displays in the history rooms are exceptionally good. They celebrate the achievement of the pupils, show the high standards they can achieve, and bring history alive. Extra-curricular enrichment is very good. History is a popular option choice. Currently it is chosen as an option by about 80 per cent of the pupils in Year 10.

89. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Information and communication technology (ICT) is now very well embedded in the curriculum. Textbooks of good quality are plentiful, and resources are much better. The departmental development plan is thoughtful and imaginative. It points the way to further improvement and shows a level of strategic thinking that makes history such a very good department.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average and represent good achievement for the group who take the examination.
- Standards achieved by all pupils by Year 9 and Year 11 are satisfactory. Pupils have positive attitudes to religious education.
- Leadership and management are good. The new head of department has already put in place strategies to raise standards further.

Commentary

90. The GCSE results for 2004 are well above the national average and reflect an improving trend over the last three years. About one-fifth of Year 11 pupils sit the full GCSE examination, and for these pupils the results point to good achievement. Other pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a general religious education course with a strong moral education content. For these pupils, achievement is satisfactory. By Year 9, pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus.

91. During the inspection, standards of work seen were average overall and represent satisfactory achievement for pupils. In lessons, pupils respond very well orally, showing a sound understanding of Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. Written work shows some pupils to be reaching above average standards, with good examples of empathetic writing about religion, relating individual beliefs and actions. Pupils have a strong moral sense, which is communicated in their discussions and written work. For example, pupils in the Year 10 GCSE group were well informed about moral dilemmas faced by believers in contemporary society, and expressed their views honestly and openly. In a discussion on cloning, one pupil objected to it because he saw cloning as against the Christian tradition, while another objected on the grounds that 'Being imperfect is part of being human.'

92. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some lessons that are good or better. Teachers work hard and relationships with pupils are good. In the best teaching, pupils became engaged in learning and were clearly thinking about the topic in hand. In some other lessons, pupils did not achieve as much as they could because the teachers' lack of specialist knowledge meant that their minds were not engaged by the lesson. Marking is inconsistent. It does not always tell pupils what they need to do to improve, and can be perfunctory. Where marking is affirmative, informative and helpful, pupils respond well.

93. Leadership and management are good. A new head of department, despite being in post only since the beginning of this term, has already made significant impact. The department now has a scheme of work and a handbook. A very good development plan identifies exactly what needs to be improved. The short course GCSE has been introduced into Years 10 and 11 for those pupils who do not choose the full GCSE option. As well as raising expectations, this is proving popular with pupils.

94. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Given the very positive attitudes of the pupils, the vision and determination of the new head of department, and the support of the headteacher and the senior management team, this is a subject with the potential to raise standards significantly.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, as a result of which pupils are underachieving and standards are too low.
- Examination results in graphics in product design at the end of Year 11 are not good enough.

- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory; monitoring and evaluation have failed to ensure sufficient improvement.

Commentary

95. By the end of Year 9, standards in design and technology are comparable with those of other schools nationally, but do not reflect the higher levels expected in similar schools. Achievement is therefore unsatisfactory. By the end of Year 11, standards remain similar to the national average. In 2003, GCSE results rose to well above average. However, in 2004, this improvement was not sustained. Results in graphics were above average, but those in product design were well below average. There have been very few A* and A grades over the last four years. By the end of Year 11, achievement is unsatisfactory because pupils' designs do not show enough development throughout their projects.

96. Achievement by the end of Year 9 is unsatisfactory because the long-term planning is not sufficiently clear and relevant. It does not reflect the Programme of Study in the National Curriculum well enough. Pupils have competent craft skills and understand some aspects of materials such as wood, metal and plastics. However, work on designing is not used effectively to support the making of products, and there is too much unfinished work. By the end of Year 11, most of pupils' coursework is carefully presented. However, research is sometimes superficial and conclusions are not always insightful. Pupils' understanding is limited by the lack of emphasis on aspects of industrial production techniques. Their understanding of social and ethical considerations is improving this term.

97. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall, although it is satisfactory in many individual lessons. In the best, there are well-focused activities to start lessons. Practical activities extend pupils' understanding well; the endings reinforce the main learning points and check pupils' understanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy working in the workshops and the 'hands-on' experiences they have in many lessons. They relish being made to think and solve problems. However, there is not enough emphasis on systematic development of pupils' ability to solve design problems. However, pupils do not have enough experience of working with modern materials or learning how new technology impacts on everyday life. The projects are not always relevant to all pupils. Teachers lack strategies for supporting pupils with additional educational needs, including the highest achievers, and pupils' achievement is, therefore, unsatisfactory. Because the planning is not clearly in place, neither are assessments. Marking is irregular and pupils do not receive sufficient feedback to improve their work.

98. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory, despite some improvement this term with the support of the local education authority. An intention to implement the revised aims for the department is not yet fully addressed in the schemes of work. Although Years 7 to 9 have enough lesson time overall, the split of time leads to rushed lessons. Despite recent improvements, there is still insufficient focus on ICT, including computer-aided design and manufacture, pneumatics and the use of flexible materials. Accommodation is dated and some of the workshops are cluttered and dusty. Several health and safety issues arise, mainly with respect to the use of large equipment, lack of dust extraction and the uneven floor. Resources are unsatisfactory and do not reflect a department that is forward thinking and aware of modern technological advancements.

99. Pupils' motivation has improved since the last inspection as a result of changes made to the way in which the subject is taught. However, many of the limitations identified in the

previous report remain, and standards have not risen sufficiently. Improvement overall is therefore unsatisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent learning is leading to very high standards at GCSE Level.
- Teaching is very good and leads to very good learning and very good achievement.
- Excellent enrichment activities extend pupils' understanding and cultural awareness.
- Inadequate accommodation and poor storage limit the range of activities possible.
- Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

100. Standards in art on pupils' entry to the school are above average. By the end of Year 9, the overall standard is well above average in the development of skills and in knowledge and understanding of art processes and artists' styles of working. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard is well above average in knowledge and understanding, in the development of skills, and in the application of fine art processes. It was not possible to observe Year 11 pupils during the inspection. This judgement is made on the basis of studying their mock examination work and talking to pupils. GCSE results in 2004 are far above average. In recent years, the pupils' results have been among the highest in the school and compare very favourably with results nationally.

101. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good. All Year 9 pupils not only understand important aspects of the work of Kandinsky and Mondrian, but have learned to become active listeners and critical thinkers when taking part in presentations of other pupils' independent research. Pupils are also achieving very well in Year 10. Their outstanding presentations, based on independent research and the willingness to experiment with new materials and record results, bear witness to the excellent attitudes of this group of boys. There is no difference in their achievement when listening, speaking or experimenting with materials. There is, however, a difference in their report writing when they are handwriting rather than word processing. This is evident, for example, when Year 7 are making notes or Year 8 are recording thought processes when reading Cubist works of art. The weakness does not lie in the quality of the content, which is very perceptive. It is evident in the range of misspellings, faulty grammatical constructions and untidy handwriting.

102. Teaching is very good overall and often outstanding. Excellent subject knowledge, very good planning and very effective teaching strategies all result in learning of a very high calibre. No one can be inattentive for long in these lessons because the pace is brisk and the expectations are very high. It is a joy to observe pupils stretched to capacity and relishing the experience. One example may give a clue to the quality of thinking and the links some pupils were able to make with other areas of knowledge because of the resources provided and the opportunities offered. With little knowledge of both Greek and Russian, one pupil applied his mind to a Russian constructivist painting and worked out that the words the artist had incorporated into the painting translated as 'blue towel'. Only

afterwards did he learn from the teacher that this abstract work was based on a laundry scene.

103. Very good leadership and management of the department ensure that pupils receive teaching of very good quality, even during the present staffing difficulties. This highly skilled leader has an international reputation as an artist and has made exceptional links with the local community and further afield. Pupils win competitions, have produced a mural for a P and O liner, and are sought after to take part in exhibitions in this country and abroad. Limitations of accommodation and lack of resources, including inefficient ICT equipment, have not affected the teaching and learning of a very effective fine art curriculum, but they have affected the development of three-dimensional work and put a ceiling on the use of ICT. Storage is a further problem, which limits the scale of work possible.

104. Improvements since the last inspection have been very good: standards and achievement are higher, behaviour is better and some three-dimensional work and ICT is in place.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching and the additional time allocated to the subject.
- Good extra-curricular provision effectively supports the progress of musically talented pupils.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation restricts pupils' opportunities for independent group work.
- The audio recording of pupils' performance and creative skills for accurate assessment is inconsistent.

Commentary

105. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 show that standards were significantly above average. In the 2003 GCSE music examination, results were significantly above the national average. Provisional results for 2004, however, show that standards have declined and are below average when compared with those nationally. A reason for this decline is that pupils' listening skills were underdeveloped. This has now been addressed, with a greater emphasis on this element.

106. Pupils join the school in Year 7 having had a varied previous musical experience, but overall are at the level expected. However, with the benefit of good teaching, and the additional time allocated to the subject in Years 7 and 8, progress is rapid. As a result, pupils achieve well and reach standards in Year 9 that are above the level expected. The achievement of pupils who play an instrument is higher. Pupils' performing skills are well established. They have good knowledge of the notes on the keyboard, read music from formal notation and are familiar with the construction of primary chords. They have a good knowledge of different styles of music and use the appropriate technical vocabulary when discussing the music. Pupils' creative development, however, is not so well established as performing and listening skills. Pupils have opportunities to compose music in different styles using the keyboard and do so with some success. However, as there are no facilities

on the keyboards for pupils to record their compositions, time has to be spent notating their work, thereby holding back their creative development.

107. During the inspection it was not possible to observe the Year 11 GCSE group, as they were involved with mock examinations. As no recordings of pupils' performances and compositions were available for scrutiny, judgements on standards have been made by observing the Year 10 GCSE class. Here the good achievement has continued, with pupils achieving standards that are above the level normally seen at this point in the academic year. All the pupils in the group are committed instrumentalists and these skills are contributing positively to their performance skills. Pupils' creative skills are well established and they successfully use a range of composing techniques.

108. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good practical skills, and effectively use their specialist knowledge to guide and help pupils to improve their performing skills. Lessons begin with good starter activities. This approach quickly engages pupils' interest and leads to lessons that have good pace and learning. The planning of lessons is thorough, with challenging tasks to develop pupils' musical knowledge. The majority of lessons conclude with sessions to ascertain pupils' understanding. These sessions, however, are mainly focused on the historical aspects of the music, with insufficient assessment of the practical activities that tended to be the main focus of the lesson. Learning is less effective when pupils are not given enough time to practise and consolidate their performing skills.

109. The leadership of the subject is good. The subject leader has a clear vision about future developments required, is aware of the weaknesses in the subject, and has put into place a series of strategies to maintain and raise standards. Management, however, is satisfactory. Despite a programme of lesson observations, practice in some areas is inconsistent, particularly in the use of audio recordings of pupils to assess pupils' creative development accurately.

110. The accommodation is unsatisfactory, with few areas for quiet practice. The outcome of this is that most of the practical activities in the classroom are restricted to working on keyboards. This is limiting opportunities for pupils to develop sounds with other instruments and independent ensemble work. The use of ICT has shown some improvement following the purchase of the appropriate hard and software. Although its use is effectively supporting pupils' learning in the examination groups, the resources are too limited to support pupils learning in Years 7 to 9.

111. The extra-curricular provision is good, providing a challenging repertoire for musically talented pupils. The improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. One of the two main issues has been partially addressed, but there has been limited progress towards better accommodation.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision for physical education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The poor accommodation is adversely affecting standards.
- The shortage of teaching and learning time adversely affects progress.
- Teaching is knowledgeable and leadership resolute, determined to overcome the obstacles to raising standards.

- The sports teams have a good measure of success in competitions.

Commentary

112. Pupils were not entered for the most recent GCSE examinations, though all gained A*-C in 2003, a proportion well above the national average. Significant numbers of pupils, currently in Years 10 and 11, are studying the GCSE course. Standards in Years 9 and 10 are similar to those seen nationally.

113. Pupils made satisfactory gains in their learning, though achievement is unsatisfactory overall due to the shortness of the lessons, the poor accommodation, and constraints on the physical education curriculum as a result of the limited range of teaching areas. Pupils' good attitudes reflect the resolute leadership of the head of department, who is determined to improve provision for the subject. Despite the poor facilities, which are undergoing a major refurbishment, all but a few pupils took a full and active part in the lessons. In Year 9, pupils demonstrated a sound understanding of the tactics used to form a 'ruck' in rugby. Higher attaining pupils moved quickly, positioned themselves well, and passed the ball with good pace and accuracy. In the core programme, pupils in Year 10 showed a sound knowledge of tactics and well-developed skills in soccer. Higher attaining pupils showed a good awareness of tactics and used close control when passing and receiving the ball. However, in all lessons, not enough attention was given to the importance of preparing the body for exercise. A significant proportion of pupils studying the GCSE course moved quickly and passed with precision during soccer. These pupils are also developing a good understanding of the theoretical aspects of physical education.

114. Teaching is satisfactory overall, though it ranges from good to unsatisfactory. In the most effective lessons, pupils benefited considerably from the teacher's good subject knowledge, activities that matched their stage of learning, a brisk pace, and detailed explanations in support of accurate demonstrations. Frequent reviews were used well to gauge pupils' understanding. However, these attributes often had a limited impact on learning because pupils did not have sufficient time to develop and refine their skills. Unsatisfactory teaching lacked pace and pupils became restless. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used sufficiently to support teaching and learning throughout the subject.

115. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has worked tirelessly in the development of the provision for the subject, although improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory due to the poor facilities, the school's relatively restricted range of physical education options, and the limited time for some pupils in Year 11. The head of department has introduced a range of helpful documentation that includes detailed schemes of work in support of a balanced curriculum, though pupils have limited opportunities to develop their skills and maintain their health-related fitness in the lessons. The lack of facilities also inhibits pupils' involvement in a balanced range of activities. Higher attaining pupils benefit from the school's successful involvement in local, regional and national competitions, in which they achieve very well, but the provision for sport generally is relatively poor.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

BUSINESS

Provision in business is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The better teaching challenges pupils, who learn effectively and achieve well.
- New and effective leadership is improving systems and raising standards. The subject leader has a clear understanding of how to raise achievement.
- Class work and homework are not always planned to match the needs of pupils with different abilities and additional learning needs.

Commentary

116. In 2004, Year 11 GCSE examination results were lower than in 2003, but they were well above the national average for all schools in recent years, and represent good achievement overall. Changes of teachers, and problems with information technology, appear to have contributed to a dip in an otherwise rising trend.

117. Standards of work seen were above average, and achievement good. Higher attaining pupils achieve very well: they grasp new ideas quickly and use subject terms and statistics confidently to support their evidence. They use ICT skilfully to prepare PowerPoint presentations when, for example, they investigate the stakeholders of the school. Lower attaining pupils do not always answer written questions fully by using the information given in questions. However, they have satisfactory understanding of such terms as the difference between sole trader, partnership, and limited liability types of businesses. Achievement of pupils with additional educational needs is satisfactory.

118. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In lessons with very good teaching, the planning of appropriate tasks that challenge all pupils is very good. Pupils are highly motivated by activities that involve thinking, and solving problems with a practical application. For example, Year 10 pupils devised formulae for a stock control program, using a computer spreadsheet. Their rate of learning was rapid because more able pupils had suitably demanding tasks, and the teacher supported those pupils who needed help. In lessons judged satisfactory, work is not matched well enough to the different learning needs of pupils, including those with additional learning needs. While homework is regularly set, it does not always relate to what different pupils can do. There is some lack of consistency in the marking of pupils' work and the quality of comments to help them improve. However, pupils do have clear information about their current standards of work, and the target grades they should aim for in the GCSE examination.

119. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader has a very clear vision for raising standards and achievement, and provides a very good model for other teachers. In her short time in post she has taken key decisions on the choice of an examination syllabus, and on the enhancement of resources, including ICT. New schemes for teaching the syllabus meet the school's guidelines. The subject leader gives good support, together with other staff, to newly qualified teachers in the subject. Assessment procedures are being improved. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

120. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship are integrated and are taught as separate lessons and through assemblies. Pupils have opportunities to understand how to live healthily and how to deal with the sorts of issues they will encounter in adult life. The PSHE course also includes careers education. Teaching also covers adequately the topics of sex, relationships and drugs at several parts of the course. The course is taught by the small team of heads of school.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good links with religious education, English and science contribute to pupils' moral and social development.
- The procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are unsatisfactory.
- There is insufficient monitoring to assess the effectiveness of other subjects' contribution to the subject.

Commentary

121. Standards in citizenship meet expectations in Years 9 and 11, and achievement overall is satisfactory. A scrutiny of the limited sample of work and observation of lessons shows that pupils are developing a secure knowledge and understanding of issues concerning rights and responsibilities. Good links with religious education teach moral matters and encourage pupils to reflect, analyse and respect the views of others on topics such as capital punishment and cloning. Good links were also seen in English, with the discussion of social and moral issues, in art through links with a special school, and in science, with stimulating displays about the social implication of science. Although other subjects highlight citizenship issues, their approach is inconsistent. Pupils have good opportunities to contribute to discussion of whole-school issues at meetings through the recently reconvened school council.

122. Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject. They enjoy the discussion sessions and listen attentively to the contributions of others. Pupils are confident to express their own opinions whilst respecting the views of others.

123. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. There are examples of good teaching. Citizenship and PSHE are taught by the three key heads of each section of the school. This arrangement has the benefit of ensuring consistency and it enhances the status and the importance of the subject. Where teaching is better, teachers promote lively discussion combined with focused questioning. This was very evident in a Year 7 class on issues of disability. Here the teacher built well on pupils' answers and promoted good opportunities for pupils to discuss issues in small groups. The outcome of this approach was that pupils developed a clear understanding of the impact of disability on people's lives, and showed a high level of empathy in their writing. In some lessons, progress could have been better if teachers had given clearer guidance about issues and not relied on pupils' existing knowledge. The assessment of pupils' work and progress is unsatisfactory. With the exception of Years 10 and 11, where pupils have recorded and written about their experiences, recording of work in Years 7 to 9 is minimal.

124. The leadership and the management of the subject are satisfactory. Although the co-ordinator has had the responsibility for only a short period, she has a clear vision about the development of the subject, understands the need to develop citizenship issues in subjects across the curriculum, and is exploring the possibilities of the introducing a GCSE for the subject.

125. The school has highlighted the subject as an area for improvement, with the need to restructure the teaching to ensure continuity and progression. To this end it has enlisted the support of the local authority advisors who have suggested ways for the school to promote the subject in its wider context.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003, the latest year for which national comparisons are validated.

GCE AS Level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	8	88	80.1	25	23.7	33.75	29.9
Biology	2	100	65.2	100	11.1	55	20.6
Business studies	20	95	69.6	23	17.9	37	63.7
Design technology	4	100	74.9	0	15.1	22.5	25.3
Chemistry	25	76	72.7	44	13.9	36.4	24.1
Economics	13	92	N/A	30	N/A	33.8	N/A
English literature	25	99	85.9	17	19.1	34.7	30.2
French	7	100	78.2	0	18.9	25.7	27.6
German	3	100	81.5	0	19.3	33.3	28.9
Geography	5	100	74.3	60	19.8	48	26.5
Govt & politics	11	100	N/A	42	N/A	45.45	N/A
Ancient history	3	100	N/A	99	N/A	56.66	N/A
History	17	88	80.7	41	19.5	38.23	28.6
Latin	3	100	68.6	66	14.4	53.3	22.7
Law	19	42	N/A	0	N/A	12.1	N/A
Mathematics	9	78	61.9	33	17.1	32.22	22.1
Applied maths	6	83	N/A	50	N/A	38.33	N/A
Pure maths	5	80	N/A	40	N/A	34	N/A
Music	1	100	N/A	100	N/A	60	N/A
Physics	12	100	68.6	58	14.4	41.66	22.7
Philosophy	12	68	N/A	16	N/A	26.66	N/A
Psychology	34	100	70	70	17	49.41	24.1
Sociology	12	92	72	75	18	47.5	25.4
Critical thinking	11	73	N/A	9	N/A	22.72	N/A
ICT	10	100	67	40	10.9	41	21.4
Human biology	13	77	N/A	23	N/A	26.92	N/A
Sports studies	10	100	73	60	18	46	25.4
Media studies	13	100	N/A	77	N/A	49.4	N/A

GCE A Level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	8	100	98.6	25	50.2	72.6	87.5
Biology	6	100	96.4	34	39.2	83.4	78.6
Business studies	13	100	98.7	0	36.8	70.8	80.1
Design and tech	6	84	97.8	0	35	40	77.9
Chemistry	9	100	97.6	66	49	88.8	84.9
Computing	6	100	95.6	16	24.5	63.4	69.5
Economics	7	100	98.9	42	52	91.4	88.3
English literature	11	100	99.5	73	46.5	94.6	86.5
French	2	100	98.8	100	51.5	110	87.6
German	3	100	98.4	66	47.9	100	84.8
General studies	39	82	94.7	23	31	62	73.1
Geography	8	88	98.7	36	44.5	80	84
Govt and politics	12	100	N/A	33	N/A	78.4	N/A

History	15	100	99	40	44.6	86.6	84.6
GCE A Level and AVCE courses							
Latin	2	100	99.5	0	55.9	70	90.9
Law	9	89	N/A	0	N/A	51.2	N/A
Mathematics	18	67	96.7	44	55.6	63.4	88.8
Further maths	5	100	N/A	0	N/A	68	N/A
Music	3	100	98.8	33	38.3	80	81.1
Physics	13	77	96.7	30	44.6	60	81.7
Philosophy	9	100	N/A	22	N/A	77.8	N/A
Psychology	11	100	86	63	43	93	83
Sociology	7	100	98	43	44	88.6	83.6
Sports studies	4	100	98	0	50	60	86.9
IT	10	100	95.6	20	24.6	78	69.5

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good expertise in the subject and, as a result, many students achieve well.
- Assessment is thorough and constructively helpful.
- Leadership and management are good.

Commentary

126. Standards in English Literature are average overall. Results in 2003 were above the national average in AS Level and A Level English Literature. The 2004 AS results fell significantly below the national average at the higher grades A/B. The 2004 A Level performance improved as students achieved better results than those of the previous year. These results show good achievement, overall, since students who choose this subject at A Level are not always those who achieve the highest grades at GCSE, and numbers are comparatively low. The proportion of students who continue their studies in English from Year 12 to Year 13 varies widely from year to year. Standards of work in English Literature in the current Year 13 are average overall, while those in Year 12 are above average. Students' level of discussion in a Year 13 lesson on the poetry of William Blake compared with that of Wordsworth was of a high standard; most students showed thorough understanding of difficult and challenging texts.

127. Teaching and learning are good overall and sometimes very good. Lessons are thoroughly prepared, and teachers have good and sometimes very good subject knowledge. Students are encouraged to have faith in their own judgements and in their response to literary texts, and teachers work hard to engage their interest and enjoyment. Teaching methods vary between teachers, but the best lessons move at a good pace, invite students both to put forward their personal opinions and to support them by reference to the text, and use a wide and appropriate range of methods to involve students. Occasionally, however, the structured approach some teachers adopt, while helping students gain in confidence, does not encourage them sufficiently to think independently and to develop their intellectual curiosity. Most students are interested in lessons and many participate well in discussion, though some passivity is evident in a few students' attitudes. Progress in

lessons is good as a result of the good planning and preparation and also the very good relationships developed between students and the teaching staff. Assessment is constructive and consistently used, and homework is used well to reinforce work done in lessons and to encourage students to research for themselves. Coursework contains helpful comment by teachers, as well as advice for improvement.

128. Leadership and management are both satisfactory, as is management of the subject. The head of department has introduced some thought-provoking texts into the curriculum, such as the poetry of Carol Anne Duffy. He ensures good breadth in the curriculum and provides a very good role model for others, though, as in the main school, there is too little opportunity for teachers to share the good practice within the department. He has dealt well with the recent changes in Post 16 examination requirements. The addition of media studies in the Sixth Form complements the English course well. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

129. Students' speaking and listening skills are good, for the most part. Many students have the confidence to explore and discuss ideas articulately and to make good presentations of their research or debate. Writing skills are less good, reflecting the technical weaknesses which have not been eradicated in the earlier years at the school. Reading skills are good and comprehension of literary texts is well fostered, but too few students are avid readers. Teachers work hard to raise standards of literacy, with a good degree of success.

Modern foreign languages

130. There was no major focus on this area, but two interesting lessons in French were sampled, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13, with different teachers, who are both native speakers. Both lessons were conducted in French. Teaching and learning in both lessons were good and led to good achievement. Year 13 students were able to link up phrases and synonyms reasonably well, with good support and clear instructions from the teacher, and they displayed quite a good understanding of the relevant vocabulary. Oral work was sound.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject knowledge and their positive and productive relationships with students are particular strengths.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Talk by the teacher dominates lessons, and teachers do not consistently provide for the spread of ability in classes.
- The provision for ICT, and its use, are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

131. Standards are above average overall. The 2003 results were well above national averages for AS mathematics and in line with national averages for A Level mathematics. The 2004 results are similar for AS mathematics but lower for A Level mathematics because of the large number of ungraded results. On the evidence of the students' work and the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 13 are above national averages and achievement is good. Students make good use of trigonometry to resolve forces in

mechanics, while higher attaining students have a good understanding of complex numbers. Retention rates are similar to those of other schools.

132. Teaching and learning in the Sixth Form are good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and awareness of examination requirements. They enjoy positive and supportive relationships with students. However, they do not consistently cater for the spread of ability, and talk by the teacher dominates too many lessons. Marking is irregular. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They confirm that teachers are approachable and readily available to support them when they have difficulties.

133. The curriculum in the Sixth Form offers options in pure mathematics, mechanics, statistics and decision mathematics, as well as further mathematics. The provision for ICT in the Sixth Form is unsatisfactory, and consequently students are unable to research mathematics sufficiently or to make use of revision programmes. The provision for literacy is satisfactory.

134. Leadership and management are satisfactory and give a clear educational direction for mathematics in the Sixth Form. Staff teams work co-operatively with one another, and monitoring is increasing in rigour in order to identify and act upon weaknesses. Schemes of work are not, however, sufficiently detailed to provide a framework for short and long term curriculum planning. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Results at the end of Year 13 are similar to those reported at the last inspection, but access to resources is improved.

Numeracy across the curriculum

135. Students' mathematical skills are above average and sufficient to support their learning in other Sixth Form subjects. Number work is good enough in business education for writing business reports and carrying out numerical analyses of business costs. Algebraic skills are used well for substitution in formulae in science, although their potential use in ICT is underrepresented. Spatial awareness is sufficient to carry out work on space and scale in art, especially abstract art. Graphical skills are in evidence in business education, and higher-order statistics, including rank correlation and tests of confidence, are apparent in geography. All in all, students are coping well with the mathematical demands of the Sixth Form curriculum.

SCIENCE

136. The focus was on chemistry, but biology and physics were sampled. Throughout the Sixth Form, teachers are knowledgeable and develop effective relationships with students: warm and good-humoured without being over-familiar. In biology, one Year 13 lesson was observed. The students were well motivated by demanding practical work and on track for A Level standards which would surpass those predicted from their former A/S grades. In physics, one Year 12 lesson was observed, in which students were being introduced to the atomic theory. Teaching and learning were good and the teacher made imaginative use of a football model to stimulate thinking about the structure of the atom.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching is based upon very good knowledge of the subject and of examination requirements.
- Students are mature and conscientious and teacher/student relationships are good.
- Poor ICT resources significantly limit teaching and learning opportunities.

Commentary

137. Standards in chemistry are above national averages. At A Level in 2004 all nine students passed, with two thirds achieving A or B grades. Numbers studying the subject at AS Level nearly doubled between 2003 and 2004, when 25 candidates took the examination. Although one in five failed, reflecting their weak GCSE results, nearly half secured A or B grades.

138. Records show that the drop-out rate at both AS and A Level is negligible and that students achieve well. The standards of work seen during the inspection were above national expectations for the course. Moreover, students' achievement is in line with, or better than, their GCSE grades would indicate. In both Year 12 and Year 13, they are highly committed and take practical work very seriously. In Year 12, for example, they responded well to a lesson in quantitative chemistry. Helpfully structured workbooks guided students through a problem about the use of hydrogen as an alternative fuel to petrol. Although they were supplied with the necessary data, they had to think for themselves. Similarly in Year 13, all showed good understanding of the concept of variable oxidation state in a lesson about the chemistry of vanadium. The teacher's subject mastery was apparent and her explanations beautifully clear. A variety of teaching approaches led to successful learning outcomes for the wide range of students concerned.

139. Teaching and learning are good. Every student observed worked conscientiously, while written work and discussion indicated that such positive attitudes are well established. Well-experienced, enthusiastic teaching is characterised by a positive, engaging but challenging style to which students readily respond. This creates a dialogue that encourages effective learning. Some imaginative teaching strategies use a teacher-customised version of the Salters' course, but ICT resources are inadequate. This is a severe handicap both to teachers in teaching many parts of the course and to students in learning through research.

140. The leadership and management of chemistry are good. The quality of technical support is also good: the technicians are well qualified and do all they can to support lessons effectively. Teaching is well organised. Schemes of work are appropriate and workbooks well designed. A substantial amount of teacher time has been invested in developing effective learning materials.

141. The previous inspection report did not focus specifically on Sixth Form chemistry, although it was noted that results in the Sixth Form were above average in all subjects and that students had a secure grasp of the more abstract scientific concepts and were stretched by the demands of the work. This continues to be the case and, given also the increasing popularity of the subject, progress since the previous inspection is judged to be good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in ICT is offered at both A2 and AS Level.

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average.
- Students achieve well and teaching is good.
- Students' attitudes are positive and they work hard.
- Teachers' plans do not provide enough opportunity for students to discuss their work.

Commentary

142. Standards are well above average. A Level results in 2004 were average and students' achievement was satisfactory. Results in the AS examination in 2004 were above average, a rise over 2003. Achievement was good.

143. For students currently taking A2, standards are well above average. All students can plan, develop and write a web site to meet the specific needs of a client, with a high degree of skill. Students evaluate their work thoroughly. Standards for AS students are also well above average. They produce professional quality presentations of research, using a wide range of software packages. This represents good achievement in both courses.

144. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and this inspires the students, who enjoy their learning, work hard and strive to improve. This is promoting good achievement. Students appreciate the good personal advice and support they receive from teachers, which ensures that all make good progress. Some lessons do not include enough time for discussions to allow students to clarify, develop and modify their ideas.

145. Leadership and management are good. Staff are committed to improvement. Standards are monitored well and appropriate action taken if they fall. Assessment is good and provides students with valuable feedback on progress towards targets. In all lessons students assess their work against examination grade criteria and this is helping raise standards. Information and communication technology (ICT) has shown good improvement since the last inspection because well above average standards are now being maintained.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

146. Students' skills in the use of computers are average, and sufficient to support their learning in other subjects. For example, they use computers competently in many subjects for word processing coursework. They use the Internet well to research. Students make good use of PowerPoint to present their work when they can. The problems are to do with sufficiency and access. There is not enough use of computers in some subjects, for example mathematics and science. Students would also like better access to computers for private study.

HUMANITIES

147. The main inspection focus was on psychology, but lessons were observed in ancient history, history, geography, government and politics, law, sociology and philosophy. **Excellent** lessons were seen in geography, government and politics, and **very good** lessons in ancient history, history and sociology. A **good** lesson was seen in philosophy and a **satisfactory** lesson in law.

148. A very good lesson was seen in Year 13 **ancient history**. The small group of students achieved well above average standards because the very good teaching led to high achievement. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge brought about a deeper understanding of the historical background to the sources being studied. The students showed above average skills in reading and interpreting the sources, and learning became a collaborative sharing of information and evaluation in the context of a scholarly discussion between teacher and students.

149. In a very good Year 13 **history** lesson, keen historians showed themselves to be very well informed about the views of different historians on power in the Nazi state in 1933-39. The teacher's very good, challenging questions kept the focus of the lesson on both the facts and the examination grade criteria. One student gave a very good presentation on Herman Goering's role at this time, which linked facts to differing historical interpretations as well as giving a final overview. Very good teaching led to very good learning and achievement.

150. An excellent **geography** lesson was observed in Year 12. Students showed excellent commitment to learning. The teaching was challenging yet still provided opportunities for students to engage in sustained and rigorous analysis. Students could not have been more

challenged or have worked harder to meet such challenges. The consequence of this excellent teaching was that students' learning and achievement were both excellent.

151. Outstanding and very well organised teaching in a Year 13 **government and politics** lesson on race and ethnicity led to very high standards, excellent learning and achievement. Students' attitudes were very mature. Their debate on sensitive issues was diplomatic but appropriate to the topic. Students were challenged to give and defend a point of view. They then had to evaluate each other's contributions, using A Level criteria. Students showed well above average standards of information, knowledge and use of language across many aspects of a complex topic. This lesson was a very effective way of preparing students for life in a multicultural world.

152. In a Year 13 lesson on the **Law** of Contract, teaching was judged satisfactory, as were learning and achievement. Students' attitudes were good.

153. One Year 13 **sociology** lesson was observed; standards were good and students achieved very well. Teaching and learning were very good because the teacher led a wide discussion on religions and religious views and students applied their learning from the course to gain new insights.

154. In a Year 13 lesson on **philosophy**, students used the Internet very well to research an essay on Sartre. Teaching, learning and achievement were good. Relationships were very good. Standards were above average overall, with some students clearly well above average.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high.
- Enthusiastic teaching, combined with profound subject knowledge on the part of the teacher, results in very good learning.
- The limited availability of computers and digital technology in the classroom slightly reduces the range of teaching and learning opportunities.
- Course units encourage academic rigour that is linked with issues of everyday relevance.
- Good use of visits and visitors enriches the range of learning opportunities.
- Students enjoy their work and appreciate the dedication of their teacher.

Commentary

155. Standards are very high. Psychology was introduced in 2000, and by 2003 results at A Level were well above the national average. All students achieved pass A-E grades and 77 per cent achieved the higher A/B grades. This represents very good achievement. Although the proportion of A/B grades was lower in 2004, the number still represented very good achievement because that year group started the course with lower GCSE grades. Standards on entry have since improved and work seen suggests that current students are likely to equal or exceed the 2003 results. Very high levels of motivation, with a commitment to reaching the highest standards, are key features of the very good

achievement seen. Very good support for students with statements of special educational need helps them to achieve very well.

156. Teaching is very good and this leads to very good learning. The choice of course modules and materials is very well suited to the learning needs of students, all of whom are new to this subject. Extra support and advice ensure that students rapidly develop the thinking and writing skills appropriate to A Level work. Well-paced lessons contain a variety of activities that maintain students' interest throughout the 100-minute sessions. Very good learning is positively promoted by:

- the teacher's enthusiasm and her detailed subject knowledge, which make lessons interesting and challenging;
- the regular use of open-ended and probing questions that lead to students' recognition and evaluation of the often complex links between key theories and their practical importance;
- the cultivation of a very positive learning ethos that supports robust discussion and constructive self-evaluation;
- high quality textbooks, articles and other support, which includes a good range of visits and visitors;
- the use of practical sessions, such as a 'stooge episode' to illustrate features of eyewitness studies, to underpin key theories and research studies.

157. Students understand the role of ethics in psychological research and explain how increasing ethical standards have modified research studies in the last 50 years. They have a good grasp of investigative and analytic principles and use these critically to evaluate published studies.

158. Whilst good use is made of selective video input, neither teacher nor students have sufficient classroom access to computers/digital technology. In consequence, the range of presentation of students' projects, for example using PowerPoint, is restricted and there is no direct access to websites in the classroom.

159. Leadership and management are very good. The quality and success of this increasingly popular subject are the sole responsibility of the head of department. She has a clear vision of excellence and a determination to secure further improvements. The head of department provides an excellent role model for students in terms of both subject knowledge and commitment to the highest standards.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

160. Two lessons were sampled in this curriculum area. Students' work was also examined and there were discussions with students. AS and A Level results for the last two years show that students make unsatisfactory progress and that achievement has declined. Teaching and learning were unsatisfactory in the lessons seen. Students have too few opportunities to use modern materials and to work with new technology, such as computer-aided design and manufacture.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

161. The main focus was on art but good lessons in music and media studies were observed. In a Year 12 **music** lesson, good teaching led to good learning and

achievement. The students were all committed musicians. Standards in the lesson were well above average because the students responded well to relevant, well focused questioning and challenging tasks, which involved them successfully in A Level skills.

162. Two **media studies** lessons were observed, both in Year 12. Teaching and learning were good and the students achieved well. They showed an above average knowledge and understanding of media and were interested in the subject. They had good recall of what they had been taught, and once they had grasped a concept they could relate it easily either orally or in writing to film or other media. They had a good knowledge of the vocabulary of the subject and used it accurately to comment and analyse. Teaching was good, well informed and thorough, ensuring that students clearly understood what was to be done. Tasks were clear and relevant. Media studies is a relatively new subject. The first A Level group achieved above average results in 2004.

Art and design

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Teaching is very good and results in current students achieving very well.
- Unsatisfactory attitudes and poor attendance have recently led to average standards at A Level.
- Inadequate accommodation and resources adversely affect achievement.

Commentary

163. Standards are above average overall. Results at AS and A Level have been variable in the last two years. All students gained a pass grade at A Level in 2004 but not at AS, where a proportion of students did not achieve a grade. The numbers of students achieving the higher grades of A/B has declined. At AS, results over the last two years show a decline in the A/B grades obtained and in the overall pass grade. This is attributed to a general disaffection with school on the part of some students, resulting in poor attendance and lack of completion of coursework.

164. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. Students are knowledgeable about western and non-western artists and cultures. All students are very articulate. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very well for research both in school and at home. No use is made of digital imagery or of other creative work involving computers, such as image distortion or layering of colour, texture or form. Students benefit from visits to galleries and talk enthusiastically about what they have seen. Evening life classes extend the range of drawing skills and open up different ways of working. Portrait painting and landscape studies are individual, with some students interested in texture, and others delighting in colour or preferring more analytical compositions.

165. The presentations of what the students learn through personal research and problem solving are of a very high quality. Other students listen respectfully and question intently. The level of discussion is far-reaching and informative, not only for the presenter but also for the audience. Sketchbooks are particularly well developed for researching artists and solving problems. Year 12 students feel limited by the range of resources available to

them. Some would like to work on a larger scale than is possible in school. One student is a photographer at home, but the lack of digital cameras and the unreliability of the equipment in school limit this route for him. All recognise the limitations of not being able to leave work out or to have a personal space in which to reflect on work in progress. Year 13 show very mature understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses as learners and pay tribute to the feedback given by the teacher. They too recognise the limitations of space, resources and storage available.

166. Teaching and learning are always very good, and were outstanding in half the lessons seen. The teacher is a fount of knowledge and an excellent role model as a fine artist and art historian.

167. Leadership and management are very good. There is a very clear vision, and a frustration with the problems that are beyond the department's control. Quality workshops, such as the recent African experience, inspire students to use other materials such as tie and dye but are paid for at the expense of providing a wider range of consumable materials. Success in this Sixth Form is evident in the numbers gaining entrance to prestigious art colleges and also receiving acknowledgement in competitions and exhibitions. After a period of instability in the school, most of the present students are very positive about the subject and achievement is very good.

168. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Sketchbooks are well used and standards in work seen are better.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

169. One Year 12 lesson in **sports studies** was observed. Students were achieving well at this stage of the course. They showed a keen interest and a mature approach to the topic. Good teaching, which probed students' understanding of fitness principle, led to good learning and achievement because students related what they were learning to their own work and experience of sport.

BUSINESS

Provision in business is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are good.
- Lessons are very well planned and teachers challenge students very well with searching questions.
- Leadership of the subject is invigorating, clear-sighted and purposeful.
- Assessment data is not used well enough to raise achievement.

Commentary

170. Standards are above average. There was an improvement in the 2004 GCE AS examination results as more students gained A/B grades than in 2003, although a small proportion did not achieve a grade. In 2003 and 2004, all students passed the GCE A Level examination. In 2003 standards were similar to those for males nationally, but below average for all students. In 2003, a fifth gained A/B grades, but in 2004 no A/B grades were obtained. From 2002 to 2004 standards declined, and this may be partly explained by changes of teachers.

171. Standards of work seen are above average expectations for the course, and students achieve well. They assimilate new facts very quickly, and they demonstrate very good attitudes in their independent and group work. They show confidence when giving presentations with PowerPoint to the class. They draw widely on their learning of theories, such as how workers are motivated, making links across the subject. They undertake independent projects to produce business reports on, for example, the viability of a café's investment in a new coffee machine. This involves calculating the turnover, costs and gross profit of the business for the evaluation. They improve in the fluency of their oral presentation, and make skilful use of ICT for writing and displaying statistics in graphs and diagrams. Students with additional educational needs achieve very well.

172. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Examples of very good and satisfactory teaching were observed. The best lessons were very well planned, so that learning was very productive. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it effectively for developing students' understanding, and for guiding them towards linking different areas of the course. Emphasis is given to ensuring that students know subject terms well, and that they use them convincingly in discussion and writing. A good variety of methods and resources is used, including PowerPoint, flip charts, spider diagrams, video-film excerpts, and individual and group presentations, to develop students' independent learning skills. In a lesson for Year 13, a student with additional learning needs received good support from an assistant so that he could contribute by giving his own presentation to the class. Occasionally, time management is weak, for example when a teacher allows students to work for too long on their own in a lesson and does not circulate enough to provide guidance. Students have good self-motivation, so they progress well, but in such lessons the teacher could improve achievement by increasing the pace of their learning. Work is carefully marked, and teachers make helpful written and oral comments to bring about improvement. Students say they find the marking helpful, and they know their target grades. In some instances, the teachers could be better informed about students' earlier attainment, their special needs and their talents, so that they can provide better for them individually.

173. Leadership and management are good. The new subject leader provides a good model for less experienced teachers, and supports them well in lesson preparation. She provides clear direction for the development of the subject, and is building a team of teachers to raise standards and achievement. She has identified gaps in appropriate textbooks and journals, and has begun to redress these. A start has been made to create working partnerships with local companies, and to develop the existing Young Enterprise Scheme. Assessment procedures are in place, and the use of assessment is being developed.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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