

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHSTED GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Sittingbourne, Kent

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118802

Headteacher: Mrs J E H Lambert

Reporting inspector: Mr Paul Cosway
2734

Dates of inspection: 3 – 6 April 2000

Inspection number: 186671

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school: | Grammar |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 11 to 18 years |
| Gender of pupils: | Girls |
| School address: | Highsted Road Sittingbourne Kent |
| Postcode: | ME10 4PT |
| Telephone number: | 01795 424223 |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr M Bradley |
| Date of previous inspection: | 22 January 1996 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Paul Cosway | Registered inspector | English as an additional language | What sort of school is it? |
| | | Sixth form | What should the school do to improve further? |
| | | | How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements |
| | | | How well are pupils taught? |
| | | | How well is the school led and managed? |
| David Ashby | Lay inspector | Equal opportunities | How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development |
| | | | How well does the school care for its pupils or students? |
| | | | How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| | | | Accommodation |
| Andrew Henderson | Team inspector | Physical education | |
| Natalie Moss | Team inspector | English | |
| Sandra Tweddell | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students? |
| Allan Ball | Team inspector | Information technology | |
| Valerie Blackburn | Team inspector | Science | Staffing |
| Philip Burchell | Team inspector | History | |
| John Challands | Team inspector | Geography | |
| Olivia Hall | Team inspector | Art | |
| | | Special educational needs | |
| Bob Hartman | Team inspector | Mathematics | Resources |
| Christine Humphreys | Team inspector | Design and technology | |
| Felicity Shuffle-Botham | Team inspector | Religious education | Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development |
| Michael Thomas | Team inspector | Music | |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a grammar school, educating girls from the age of 11 to 18. A small number of pupils, including boys, is admitted to the senior school from neighbouring schools. There is a consortium arrangement with these schools to provide a good range of A level choices. Most pupils enter at the age of 11, selected by an eleven plus examination that enables the Local Authority to select the top 25 per cent of candidates entered, a higher proportion than is selected for most grammar schools across the country. A further cohort is admitted at the end of their time in local middle schools. There are 800 girls and 5 boys on roll. The vast majority is white, although the school does have the advantage of a small number of pupils who represent other world cultures. For one and a half per cent of pupils, English is an additional language, which is close to the average nationally. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, just over three per cent, is well below the national average. The proportion identified as having special educational needs is also well below average. Pupils are drawn from a wide area, including outlying commuter villages and extensive urban areas with a high proportion of local authority and rented housing.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. It has maintained the very good attitudes that were a feature of the school at the time of the last inspection. Behaviour has improved from very good to excellent. Very good leadership has an even sharper focus on high attainment. As a result, teaching has improved, standards have risen further and there is a broad curriculum that offers a good balance of courses. The personal development of pupils is very good; the girls grow to become confident and independent learners. The school makes very good use of the resources and funds available to it and provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Attainment is very high in almost every subject and pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress. Their learning skills are a particular strength and are developed very well.
- Pupils develop very positive attitudes to school and work hard, realising the importance of study. Their behaviour is excellent.
- Relationships are excellent and pupils' personal, moral and social development is very good.
- Teaching is very good overall across the school and teachers have very good subject expertise.
- The leadership and management of the school are very good. The level of care for pupils is excellent.
- The school makes very effective use of funding and other resources available to it.

What could be improved

- The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades, A* and A, in GCSE examinations is very high in some subjects, such as English literature and history, but is not consistently high across all areas of the curriculum. There is a need to extend the high attainers even further in order to get the best out of them in all subjects.
- There are some weaknesses in accommodation and resourcing that are affecting standards in some areas, such as information technology and some statutory requirements for information technology and religious education are not being met.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1996. Since then there has been good progress. There has been good progress in raising the performance of pupils in the end of Key Stage 3 tests and in GCSE examinations. There has been a significant increase in the proportion of pupils gaining very high levels in English and science at the end of Year 9. The proportions of pupils who gain five or more GCSE passes in the range the grades A* to C has risen from 95 per cent to over 99 per cent in that time. The quality of teaching has improved from 66 per cent being good or very good to almost 85 per cent, with examples of excellent teaching. Much of this is the result of the high expectations and guidance of the headteacher and senior management, along with the commitment of the teaching staff. The last report found that there were weaknesses in the school's development planning and some statutory requirements were not being met. Development planning is now good.

Some statutory requirements in information technology and religious education are not in place, but are planned for September.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A level/AS level examinations.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools |
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1999 |
| GCSE examinations | A* | A* | A* | C |
| A-levels/AS-levels | C | C | D | |

Key
 well above average A
 above average B
 average C
 below average D
 well below average E

Over the past three years, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has been very high, in the top five per cent nationally, although below the average for all grammar schools. The comparison with similar schools does not do justice to the attainment in this school, because the figures include schools with a greater degree of selection than is the case in this part of Kent. Attainment has risen at GCSE, at a higher rate than that found nationally. There has been significant improvement in the percentage of pupils who have attained five or more passes at A* to C grades, from 95 in 1997 to 99.1 in 1999. This is very high compared with the national average, within the top five per cent of schools. The national average is currently 46.3 per cent. Overall attainment at GCSE is very high compared with all schools and is average compared with similar schools.

At A level, attainment was slightly below average in 1999, but has been close to average taking the last three years' results together. This is partly because the school has had a policy, now changed, of limiting most students to three A level subjects.

Overall, the inspection team found that attainment is currently very similar to that indicated by last year's test and examination results. At GCSE, attainment is particularly high in English literature, history, mathematics, French and design and technology. Attainment is slightly low compared with other subjects within the school in Sports Studies, geography and drama, although it is still significantly above national averages.

The school has set itself targets for the year 2000 of 97 per cent of pupils attaining five or more A* to C GCSE passes and 98 per cent attaining five or more A* to G passes. It has exceeded both targets already. It is now appropriate to raise these even further and higher targets are under active consideration.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good: pupils enjoy school and work very hard. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Excellent: behaviour is generally exemplary in lessons and around the school. |
| Personal development and relationships | Excellent: pupils relate excellently to one another and to adults. They work well together and treat everyone with equal respect and courtesy. |
| Attendance | Very good: well above the national average, with no unauthorised absence. |

The very positive attitudes to work and school that the school engenders in all pupils are a strong contributory factor in its success. Pupils respect their teachers, value the school very highly and believe they are privileged to be here. They want to succeed and so they sustain concentration in order to get the most out of their lessons. The very good levels of attendance mean that learning is

not interrupted and this has a positive effect on standards. The pupils are given many opportunities to be responsible and to learn to work independently. They respond to these well.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | aged 11-14 years | aged 14-16 years | aged over 16 years |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Lessons seen overall | very good | very good | very good |

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching in English is very good at Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4, with very good teaching in the sixth form. In mathematics, teaching is very good at all stages. In science, it is good in Key Stage 3, but very good at Key Stage 4 and in the senior school.

There are many strengths in teaching. Ten per cent of teaching is excellent and forty per cent very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. There are examples of very good or excellent teaching in all subjects. Teaching is very good overall in the senior school. There are no subjects where teaching is weak. Overall, the teaching meets the needs of all pupils very well, including those with special educational needs, but in some classes the higher attaining pupils are not challenged consistently well.

The strengths in teaching are in the very good planning and excellent relationships. All teachers have very good subject expertise, which makes their lessons interesting, sometimes inspirational, and in general they have high expectations of their pupils. The brisk pace of learning that results, and the sustained concentration, lead to good progress being made. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very well. Pupils are encouraged to collaborate and listen and so learn to respect and value the views of others. Overall, the quality of teaching is a major strength of the school and, as a result, learning skills develop well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Very good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. It is a very rich curriculum and provides the pupils with a very good range of learning experiences, extending their intellectual and cultural horizons. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Very good: the provision for these pupils is managed well. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | The pupils for whom English is an additional language in both key stages are fluent in English. Teachers are sensitive to their needs. None is at an early stage of learning English and they are fully integrated into the mainstream curriculum. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Very good: there is excellent provision for social and moral development. There is little planned provision for spiritual development, but it is good overall because many teachers recognise opportunities to explore questions about meaning and purpose, values and beliefs. The provision for cultural development is very good. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Excellent: the way the school cares for its pupils is of a very high standard indeed. |

The school works well in partnership with parents. The information it provides for parents is very good. The support that parents give their children is a strong factor in the school's success. The curriculum is generally rich and appropriate, enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, drama, music, art, trips abroad and to museums. In the sixth form the range of additional subjects, including archeology and classics, is good. At Key Stages 3 and 4, some elements of the programmes of study for information technology do not meet statutory

requirements and students in Year 13 do not take religious education, though the school plans to meet these requirements fully in September. The procedures for ensuring good attendance, good behaviour and freedom from oppressive behaviour are all very effective.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Very good: excellent leadership from the headteacher and senior management team provides clear direction for the work of the school, setting high expectations for both pupils and staff. The school is managed very well and this has been a key factor in its recent improvement. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Satisfactory: the governors are supportive of the school and give of their time willingly to help the school and be involved in its work. They fulfil their responsibilities adequately. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Good: at a whole-school level, the school evaluates its performance very well. At a department level, it is very good in some departments, but it is less consistently effective. |
| The strategic use of resources | All lessons are taught by well-qualified, specialist teachers. The accommodation is used well, though there are weaknesses in the accommodation for science, food technology, drama, music and physical education. Effective use is made of all learning resources, such as books, equipment and computers, but there is a shortage of information technology resources in some subject areas, such as science, music and art. The library has a good range of fiction but there are shortages of information books for some subjects. |

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|--|
| <p>Between 90 and 97 per cent of parents think that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their children like school and are making good progress. • behaviour is good in school and so is teaching. • The school expects its pupils to work hard and is developing responsible attitudes in them. • they would be comfortable approaching the school with any questions or problems they may have. • the school is led and managed well. | <p>Of those who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 per cent of parents are concerned about the amount of homework that is set. • 18 per cent do not feel well informed about how their children are getting on at school. • 16 per cent do not think that the school works closely enough with parents. |

The inspectors agree with the positive points made by parents, finding that pupils make very good progress, behave excellently and develop independence and responsibility. Their positive attitudes to school and their enjoyment of it, encouraged by their parents, are very positive influences, helping them to attain well and benefit from the good teaching. The homework provision is very good, though for some pupils it can mean that they have little time for other activities out of school. The amount of information parents receive about their children's progress and the quality of information provided about the school is above average. The school works hard to involve parents, but this is sometimes difficult because some parents live long distances from the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Overall, pupils make good progress during their time in the school. Their attainment on entry is above average, with very few pupils gaining less than level 4 in any of the three core subjects. However, for a grammar school intake, attainment on entry is lower than would normally be expected. In English, almost a quarter of pupils have attained level 4, the expected standard, with the rest at level 5. In mathematics, almost 38 per cent attained level 4 and in science, 57 per cent are at level 4 or below, with a few pupils at level 3. Standardised tests give further evidence that the intake has relatively few high attainers and a higher proportion of low attainers than would be typical of a grammar school. In recent years, almost ten per cent of pupils were below average and only twenty per cent were well above average on standardised tests. The school takes a relatively high proportion of the local school population - 25 per cent of the girls in the catchment area are admitted – and overall the local area is not an advantaged one.
2. By the end of Year 11, attainment is very high compared with all other schools. Compared with other grammar schools, attainment is average. At A level, attainment was below average last year, but has been close to average overall over the last three years. The fact that the school had not, until this year, encouraged pupils to take more than three subjects at A level has meant that the average point score per candidate has been lower than the attainment of pupils actually deserves. Overall, standards of attainment have improved since the last report.

Key Stage 3

3. At Key Stage 3, improvement in performance in the National Curriculum tests over the last four years has been broadly in line with the trend nationally and the attainment of pupils in the school has remained very high compared with the average nationally. Nevertheless, attainment is well below average compared to other grammar schools, because the attainment on entry is relatively low. All pupils make very good progress to attain these high overall grades at the end of Key Stage 3.
4. Examining the National Curriculum test results for 1999 by subject, attainment in mathematics was very high compared with the country as a whole. Nationally, 64 per cent of pupils attained the expected level for their age, level 5. In this school, all the pupils who took the test attained at least this level. The higher grades, level 6 and 7, were attained by 38 per cent of pupils nationally. Here, 97 per cent attained at least level 6. The indications are that they are over three years ahead of other girls of a similar age nationally. Their attainment was average compared with pupils in other grammar schools. Over the last four years, attainment has been consistently very high. In English, attainment was also very high and the pupils have been, consistently over the last four years, more than two years ahead of girls of their age nationally. All the pupils entered gained level 5 or above, against 64 per cent nationally, and 85 per cent attained levels 6 or 7, compared with 28 per cent in the country as a whole. Again, these high levels of performance have been sustained over the past three years and compared with pupils in similar schools they are average. In science, pupils' performance was also very high and they are ahead of girls nationally by over two years. In 1999, they were below average for pupils in similar schools. Nevertheless their results were impressive. All pupils attained at least the expected standard, compared with 54 per cent nationally. The higher levels were attained by 73 per cent of the pupils, whereas nationally last year only 23 per cent reached these levels.
5. Over the three core subjects, almost all pupils raised their performance by two levels from their attainment on entry. This is very good progress. By contrast, the national expectation is that pupils will rise one National Curriculum level between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, but not all succeed in doing so.
6. The findings of the inspection support the levels of attainment in the core subjects indicated by last year's end of Key Stage 3 test results. Attainment is already very high in mathematics and well above average in English and science. It is in line to be very high at the end of the key stage, compared with schools nationally, in English, mathematics and science. In the other subjects of the curriculum, attainment is above average in design and technology; pupils have

high level problem solving skills and a good technical vocabulary. It is well above average in art, with pupils showing very well developed sketching skills and very good use of colour. Attainment is also well above average, compared with attainment nationally, in religious education, geography, history and modern foreign languages. Overall, they reach above average standards in physical education, especially in games; information technology and in drama, where they work well together to explore issues in small group work. They attain standards above those expected for their age in music, where their music-making skills develop well.

Key Stage 4

7. Attainment at GCSE, measured by the average point score per candidate, has risen since the last report much more quickly than the average nationally - at more than double the annual rate. In 1996, the average point score for Highsted School, the most accurate measure of pupils' attainment over all the GCSE examinations they take, was 51.4, against a national average of 34.6. In 1999, the average point score was 56.9, representing very high attainment compared with the national average of 37.8. Over this period, the national average rose by 2.8 points, whilst the Highsted score rose by more than double that, by 5.5 points. Compared with the results of girls nationally, the school's point score has also risen at a rate greater than that nationally. Even more significant has been the rise in the proportion of pupils who pass five or more GCSE examinations at grades A* to C. In 1996, the year of the last report, this was 95 per cent. By 1999, it had risen to 99.1 per cent. This is very high compared with the national average, which is currently 46.3. Of the pupils who took the examination, the pass rate for attaining five or more passes at A* to C was actually even better, 100 per cent. One girl was not entered because she was in Year 10, having missed two years of schooling.
8. The results at GCSE were significantly above the national average in every subject. In three subjects (English, English literature and German) every candidate attained a pass between A* and C. In English, this included every pupil in Year 11. In English literature, almost 70 per cent of the year group attained A* or A grades. Indicators show that the subjects in which pupils attained most consistently well were history, English literature, mathematics, French, German and design and technology. Attainment was relatively low in drama, physical education and geography, although still much higher than the national average.
9. The finding of the inspection is that attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 4 is very high. It is especially high in speaking and listening. Pupils are particularly articulate and fluent, and can address adults appropriately and well in standard English. All pupils listen very well. Reading skills are high and pupils are adept at using books and information technology to access information. Writing skills are very high overall. Pupils can write expressively and analytically, adapting their styles well for different purposes and audiences. The presentation of written work is very good, a matter of great personal pride, and pupils of all abilities make very few grammatical, punctuation or spelling errors. Attainment is very high in English literature. Pupils read with considerable understanding and express their ideas about fiction very well both orally and in writing. They have made good progress in English over both key stages.
10. Attainment in mathematics is very high at the end of Year 11. Pupils' knowledge of mathematics is very high and they have the mathematical skills to perform well in examinations. They can solve problems well and accurately with little prompting from the teacher and by Key Stage 4 are able to enjoy discovering new ways of approaching mathematical calculations. All pupils make good progress through the school in developing numeracy skills. Similarly good progress is made in science. Pupils are prepared very well for the GCSE examination in science. They show high levels of knowledge of science and of scientific principles. Standards of scientific investigation have improved greatly since the last report and are now high. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils can make detailed predictions of the expected results of their investigations and base these predictions on sound scientific knowledge and very good understanding of the subject.
11. In those subjects in which attainment is very high at the end of Key Stage 3, standards are sustained and it remains very high at the end of Key Stage 4. In design and technology, almost all pupils demonstrate very high levels of technical knowledge and skill. Attainment continues to be well above average in art, with pupils working to a very good standard in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional art. Similarly in geography, some pupils attain very high standards, with the rest generally well above average in their knowledge and understanding of geographical facts and concepts. All pupils continue to develop their insight

and the breadth of their knowledge of religious education well and attainment continues to be well above average at the end of the key stage. Historical skills are developed well and attainment is well above average. Although there are some problems with resources and coverage of the programme of study in information technology, attainment overall is still above average at the end of Key Stage 4.

12. Attainment is even higher in the remaining subjects than it was at the end of Key Stage 3, because of the very good progress that pupils make continuously from Year 7 onwards. Overall, it is very high, compared with that in schools nationally, in modern foreign languages, with pupils showing considerable fluency and confidence when speaking French or German and both reading and writing the languages very well. All pupils perform with skills well above average in physical education and those taking the subject at GCSE level attain a very high standard. These pupils do some exceptional work in the written, theoretical sections of the examination. The pupils taking GCSE music develop their skills of performance and composition well and their attainment at the end of the key stage is well above average.
13. At A level, the average points score in 1999 was below the national average. This is because candidates are entered for two or three A levels rather than three or four. This policy has been changed and the current Year 13 students take general studies in addition to their selected subjects. The school has an 'open door' policy on admission to the senior school and there is no selection criteria for entry. Students who completed their Key Stage 4 education at other schools, including boys from local high schools, are admitted. The finding of the inspection is that levels of attainment in A level subjects are better than indicated by the overall results last year. They are never less than average and are above average overall.
14. Attainment in English, science and mathematics is above average. It is very high in geography and in design and technology. Attainment is well above average in music and in sports studies. In art and modern foreign languages, the students are working at levels close to the average nationally for A level work, but the numbers are too low to make meaningful comparisons. Those students taking courses that are introduced at senior school level - classical civilisation, archaeology, Latin, business studies, theatre studies, government and politics and sociology - all respond well to the very good teaching and make good progress. Attainment is above average in all these additional courses.
15. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire believe that pupils make good progress at the school and the inspection finds this to be true. Over their whole time in the school, for example, pupils make very good progress in English and in the development of their literacy skills. This is in large part due to the hard work of the English department, where teachers work skilfully to develop reading and writing skills. Drama provides good additional opportunities to develop a spoken vocabulary that pupils can transfer to their written work. Most subjects teach pupils the specialist vocabulary they need to succeed in their work and help them to express themselves better. There is a good awareness of the importance of literacy across the school and overall it is developed well.
16. The few pupils with special educational needs are supported very well in their learning across the curriculum and make good progress. They attain standards that are good in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress. No pupil in the school is at an early stage in her acquisition of English.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Since the last inspection, pupils' attitudes, values and personal development have remained consistently very good. Behaviour, personal development, and relationships have exceeded the very high levels reported last time and are excellent. Attendance is again consistently very good. Pupils enjoy school and work very hard. They make a significant contribution to the work of the school and the very positive purposeful atmosphere that permeates the whole school. The pupils' attitudes, response and behaviour across all lessons range from satisfactory to excellent. In a very significant number of lessons, around 60 per cent, pupils have good or very good attitudes and in 28 per cent pupils' attitudes are excellent.
18. Overall, the pupils' attitudes to the school are very good. They have established excellent relationships with each other and with all staff. They co-operate very well with each other and with staff and this helps them to achieve very high levels of purposeful work in lessons. Pupils care for each other. All older pupils take a very caring and responsible attitude to younger

pupils from the time they join the school. For example, Year 8 pupils play an important role in caring for the new Year 7 pupils. This continues throughout the school, with senior school pupils acting as counsellors or mentors to younger pupils.

19. The excellence of behaviour in lessons and around the school has a very positive impact on pupils' work and concentration. Pupils respond very well indeed to the very high expectations the school has of pupils' behaviour. They show a natural inclination to very high levels of politeness, courtesy and good manners. They acknowledge adults with a warm, friendly smile. The result is a very calm, very positive and purposeful climate for learning, with no evidence of aggressive or racist behaviour. If any misbehaviour occurs, which is extremely rare, it is dealt with promptly and effectively. It does not have any adverse effect on learning. There have been no exclusions in the last 20 years.
20. Pupils' personal development is also excellent. All pupils show a deep sense of responsibility, enthusiasm and confidence. They all accept responsibility enthusiastically and carry it very well indeed, older pupils taking a full part through being prefects, pupil counsellors or mentors. Pupils in all years take a very responsible approach to their roles in the student council, as reception support, or library monitors; and for organising their work and other school activities. They are very good at taking responsibility for their own individual study skills through their use of the library and computer facilities. They study extremely well without supervision when these opportunities are available.
21. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are significant contributors to the atmosphere of a purposeful, caring school community. They thrive in the confidence that the school has in them to be totally dependable, reliable and self-reliant in their daily work and play. Very many are involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. There is a very high level of involvement in charity events and the pupils respond very well, using their initiative and organisational skills to make these a success and showing very good social skills in their interactions with each other and the general public. They entertain local senior citizens with excerpts from their concerts and prepare and serve food. Their efforts and their conduct are greatly appreciated and admired by those who attend. All pupils show a significant sense of pride in their achievements and their school. The school helps to celebrate this with the excellent annual awards evening that clearly recognises every pupil for what they have achieved at the school.
22. Attendance is very good and is well above national levels. Pupils clearly like coming to school and attending lessons and this has a very positive effect on the progress they make.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. At the time of the last report teaching was good overall, but there was some unsatisfactory teaching in the school. Teaching was good or very good in about 66 per cent of lessons and some examples of good teaching were seen in most subject areas. Weaker aspects of teaching were the lack of use of assessment information; too great a focus on content, slowing down the pace of lessons; a lack of challenge across the ability range; and the work set being too easy.
24. The school has made very good progress in addressing the issues raised, and is well placed to continue to improve in future. The senior management team has put in place an impressive programme of lesson monitoring and meetings with middle managers, aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. A considerable amount of professional development has been carried out across the school and support and career counselling provided for teachers who are recognised to be struggling with any aspect of their role.
25. As a result, there is now no unsatisfactory teaching in the school. A much higher percentage of teaching is very good or excellent compared with the last report: a very high proportion, half the teaching, falls into this category. Whereas 66 per cent of teaching was good or better at the time of the last report, the proportion is now over 88 per cent. The proportions of good and very good teaching are almost identical across the two key stages and the sixth form (senior school) and teaching is very good overall at all key stages.
26. The school monitors temporary and supply teachers carefully to ensure that the pupils' education suffers as little as possible when their permanent teachers are absent for any

reason. There were teachers absent during the inspection, because of illness or because they were supervising residential visits. Several classes were being taught by initial teacher training students. It is proof of the effectiveness of the school's monitoring and support arrangements that no unsatisfactory teaching was recorded despite this and that the overall effectiveness of teaching is so high. Teaching was described in the last report as a strength of the school. It is now a very significant strength and makes a major contribution to the quality of education and the standards attained.

27. A feature of the better teaching is good subject knowledge that gives teachers the ability and confidence to extend and challenge even the most able pupils. In these lessons, teachers have positive relationships with their pupils. This leads to effective class control and an atmosphere of trust, in which pupils are able to share ideas and learn from their mistakes without being discouraged from trying hard in future. Teachers plan very effectively, setting clear learning objectives for the lesson. They share these objectives effectively with the pupils, so that they know what is expected, and revisit them at the end of the lesson to consolidate their learning. Lessons are structured so that skills and knowledge are built gradually and progressively over time. Resources are prepared to support lessons effectively. The pace of learning is brisk in the good lessons, and pupils are challenged appropriately. Those with lower attainment are supported in their learning, and the higher attainers are challenged and extended. Homework is used well to extend the learning opportunities in class.
28. There are many examples of very good teaching that illustrate these points. An A level history lesson was taught with great enthusiasm that made the pupils interested and led to their enjoying the lesson. The teacher's very good subject knowledge ensured that the students were challenged and their learning extended. Questioning was used very well to test out the students' understanding of Napoleon's political activities and to enable them to rehearse and consolidate their ideas. The pupils had chosen A level history because, they said, the very good teaching of the subject at GCSE had made them enthusiastic to pursue their studies further. Excellent teaching of a Year 8 German class again demonstrated the strength of a teacher's subject knowledge. Her use and knowledge of German were excellent and enabled her to be an excellent model for the pupils. Her command of German not only provided them with a wide vocabulary and a very good accent to learn from, but also set high expectations for what they could eventually achieve. The pupils were highly motivated as a result and enjoyed the lesson, their confidence and enthusiasm very evident. The class control was firm but friendly, creating an excellent environment for learning in which pupils worked and concentrated very well and felt able to make mistakes and learn from them. In both cases, the pupils made excellent progress, sustained concentration throughout the lessons, thought for themselves and developed their ideas. They understood fully what they were doing and what was needed to improve their work further.
29. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory rather than very good, there are many of the strengths that are consistent across almost all lessons. Teachers plan and prepare well so that the work is generally appropriate. It is organised so that pupils can build on what they have done and learned previously. In lessons that are good or better, the pupils know what the teachers want of them and how they can improve their work. The teachers have good class control and management, which ensures that there are no interruptions and the pupils learn at a brisk pace. In satisfactory lessons, there are occasional weaknesses. In some lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, the lessons are planned well, but the management of time is not good. The pace is slow, which slows down the learning and means that the pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Pupils are sometimes not sure what to do or not sure of the objectives of the lessons. There are rare occasions when the teacher talks for too long so that there is too little time for the pupils to get on with their work. In a Year 11 English lesson, for example, too long was spent explaining to pupils how to fill in the cover sheet for their GCSE course work and the pupils became restless and slightly bored, though they attained well in the end. In a Year 7 science lesson, no deadlines were set for the completion of a group task. Some groups finished and were left with nothing to do while other groups worked more slowly. Overall, they made satisfactory progress. In some mixed ability lessons, the level of challenge in otherwise satisfactory lessons is generally appropriate for the whole class, but fails to take account of individual differences and needs. As in the science lesson already mentioned, this means that the higher attaining pupils are not always being extended fully.
30. Teaching is very good at Key Stages 3 and 4 in the senior school in English. The planning and organisation of lessons are areas of strength, as is the extent of teachers' subject knowledge. Pupils respond well to the high expectations of their teachers and work hard in order to

succeed. In mathematics, there is very good teaching in all key stages. Again, the teachers' subject knowledge is a considerable strength and the brisk pace of lessons ensures that pupils make very good progress. Teaching in science is good overall in Key Stage 3, characterised by good subject expertise. Teachers work well to encourage scientific thought from their pupils, with good use of questioning to promote understanding. It is very good in Key Stage 4 and in the senior school.

31. The quality of teaching is a strength in all departments and makes a significant contribution to standards and the quality of learning. The teaching of history is very good across the school, because of the high expectations of teachers and the depth of their knowledge that enables them to motivate and challenge pupils. Teaching is good in physical education lessons for all up to Year 11 and very good at GCSE level and in the senior school, ensuring that pupils learn well and work hard. Teaching is very good overall in modern foreign languages and there are strengths in the use of the foreign language and in the wide and interesting range of activities that keep pupils' interest so that they learn well.
32. There is very good teaching in Key Stage 3 and good teaching in Key Stage 4 in religious education. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan very interesting lessons that stimulate the pupils to attain well. Very good teaching of art in the senior school and good teaching to the rest of the school is characterised by enthusiasm and good subject knowledge, leading to good progress. Pupils are responding to the teachers' high expectations by working hard and taking great pride in the presentation of their work. Teaching is consistently good in design and technology, music and information technology across the school and, as a result, pupils learn well, enjoying their lessons, concentrating and working hard to make progress.
33. In geography, teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and 4 and very good in the senior school. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is very good, always planned effectively to help these pupils to meet the targets they have been set. The targets in their individual education plans are specific and the good use of assessment information by teachers helps them make progress.
34. Overall, the high quality of teaching is a very significant strength of the school and is identified by parents as one of its best features. In most lessons pupils develop good, often very good, learning skills as a result. They respond well to the expectations of them and work hard in class, concentrating well on their work and making considerable intellectual and, when appropriate, creative effort. The clear instructions they are given always ensure that they know what is expected of them. In the majority of lessons, teachers use assessment to help pupils improve, by ensuring that they know what they have to do to raise the level of their work. The school needs to ensure that this is true of all lessons, especially for the higher attaining pupils.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS AND STUDENTS?

35. The curriculum at all key stages is very good, offering pupils rich learning opportunities. At Key Stage 3, pupils study the subjects of the National Curriculum. They also take part in an activities week that is extremely well organised and supports their personal development. The curriculum offers equal opportunities for all.
36. At Key Stage 4, pupils study English language and literature, mathematics, science and design and technology, religious education, physical education and information and communication technology. They also study a modern foreign language and either history or geography. In addition, pupils have the opportunity to choose three subjects from a range of option choices. There are limits for some pupils; for example those who wish to study two modern languages are restricted in other choices. In Year 10, all pupils take part in an enterprise week, planning for which begins in September. The course is extremely well organised and makes most effective use of local businesses. Pupils are given the opportunity to develop a wide range of personal skills, including the management of money.
37. In the senior school, pupils can select from a wide range of A level courses, including, for the first time this year, general studies. Links with two other local sixth forms enable pupils to broaden their choice. The links are developing to widen the choice further. Students can follow a complementary studies course, which includes employment, driveability (road awareness), health, moral issues, sport and information and communication technology.

Currently, there is no provision for religious education in Year 13. The school is aware of this and has tackled the issue on the development plan.

38. National Curriculum requirements are met in full except for some aspects of information and communication technology. Data capture and measurement are taught to some classes, but not all, depending on the availability of equipment. These aspects are not taught as part of discrete information and communication technology lessons, but as part of courses in other subject areas, such as science. This problem has been recognised in the school development plan and is being addressed.
39. The personal and social education programme is excellent and is taught to all pupils in the school. It covers health, sex and drugs education. The planning is very good, covering each week of the school year. The programme makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.
40. The careers programme is also excellent and begins in Year 7. It is very well planned and comprehensive, culminating in a week of work experience in Year 11. In the sixth form, pupils work with local schools and businesses. The programme prepares pupils very well for further education and work.
41. All departments review their subject documentation annually. The documentation offers helpful guidance for teachers when they plan lessons. Generally, the guidance has sufficient detail for teachers to ensure progression in pupils' learning and consistency across year groups. Pupils are taught in mixed ability groups across the school, apart from mathematics from Years 8 to 11 and science in Years 10 and 11. Generally, teachers plan well to ensure that work is appropriate for the attainment of all pupils, but the planning of work that is suitably challenging to stretch the higher attainers is sometimes less effective in geography, history, music and science, amongst others.
42. Skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well across the school. A working group has recently been considering how to enhance the teaching of skills of literacy. Similar work is planned to start in numeracy. Study skills are taught effectively in all departments. The library is available for private study at lunchtimes and after school and many pupils use this facility well.
43. A very good range of extra-curricular activities covering arts, music, sports and other clubs such as debating and chess and public speaking enhances the curriculum. Pupils take part in competitive sports, for example netball, athletics and swimming. Pupils have good opportunities to go on visits including trips and exchanges with France and Germany.
44. Links with the community are very good through the enterprise and careers programmes. Pupils are involved in the community through concerts to which local residents are invited. Links with feeder primary schools are also very good.
45. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and pupils make very good progress. Parents are involved with staff and pupils. The level of support is very good through the pastoral system.
46. Sound improvement has taken place since the last inspection. Apart from in Year 13, all pupils now study religious education. There is still the imbalance of time for some subjects in Year 8 because of the introduction of a second language, but this is made good across the whole of Key Stage 3 and does not have an adverse effect on the progress pupils make. The consortium arrangements with other schools are enabling the choice of subjects at A level to be broadened.
47. The school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. There is a clear understanding within the school that the development of the whole pupil is the priority. Pupils share this understanding and are ready to seize opportunities when they are offered.
48. The school meets the legal requirements for a daily act of worship. On the majority of mornings, assemblies are held for most of the school. All have a moral and social element, and a significant number have clear religious and spiritual inputs, including prayer. On the few days when pupils do not attend assembly, a 'Thought for the Day' is shared in tutor time. This fulfils statutory requirements generally and is a worthwhile activity.

49. The provision for spiritual development is good. In history, pupils have the opportunity for spiritual insight in their study of the effects of war and the holocaust that accompanied it. The visit to Ypres provides profound opportunities for spiritual development. In art, the consideration of the use and representation of African masks in religious ritual provokes thought and reflection. Pupils have the opportunity to reflect and experience spiritual growth in their sharing of music and in particular their study of the music of the church mass. In religious education, pupils are provided with the time to reflect on ultimate questions of life and death and their place within the scheme of things. They consider the beliefs and philosophies behind religion and understand the effects of belief upon the individual. The department provides very worthwhile opportunities for spiritual development in the periods of meditation and reflection that are available for the pupils.
50. The provision for moral education is excellent. The school has clear expectations of behaviour, based on self-control and mutual respect. All members of staff provide good role models. There are effective and well understood sanctions, along with a good system of rewards and merits. Very good opportunities for pupils to consider moral and ethical issues are provided in science, where pupils consider such topics as genetic engineering and the environment. Opportunities are also good in religious education, where issues such as euthanasia and racism are discussed, and in the personal and social education course. Here, pupils consider the dangers of the misuse of drugs. They are encouraged to support various charity appeals and last year raised over two thousand pounds to help worthwhile causes. Pupils are also encouraged to give their time to help those less advantaged, and support has been given to Kent Adventure Club for the disabled. Within the school, senior pupils are trained to act as counsellors and mentors for younger pupils, and to support health education programmes and anti-bullying strategies.
51. The provision for social development is excellent. The social development of pupils is encouraged by their involvement in many areas of school life outside the curriculum time. Peer-led health education lessons and participation in the school council provide opportunity for very worthwhile interaction between year groups, and for the development of responsibility. There are very good opportunities for residential experience during the annual activity week, as well as on the various exchange trips to France and Germany. The pupils are encouraged to become involved in the wider community through work experience and the enterprise scheme. They have provided work for the local hospital, Swale Borough Council and the area education office. The school hosts the a meeting of the Over Fifties Club each year and pupils are happy to provide refreshment and entertainment for it, as well as for local primary schools. The many sporting activities supported by the school encourage teamwork and co-operative fair play, as do the group activities and discussions that take place in many curriculum areas.
52. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is very good. The school provides a variety of clubs and societies to foster the talents of its pupils. Music and drama performances involve almost all pupils and there is a good take-up for the book and film clubs. Visits to art galleries by the sixth form, theatre trips, archaeological 'digs' and trips to museums enable pupils to develop an appreciation for culture of Britain. The multi-cultural nature of British society is demonstrated to pupils by their visit to the Hindu mandir, in Year 7, and in study of the lifestyle and culture of the peoples whose beliefs are covered in religious education. The school's exchange programme enables pupils to experience life in another culture, while other areas of study provide pupils with opportunities to use multi-cultural examples in their work. Art considers the influences of American, Eastern, African and European artists, while music from India and China is considered along with calypso and blues music.
53. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, especially in the provision for spiritual development. An audit has been carried out to identify the range of possible opportunities for promoting it across the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

54. Since the last inspection, the school has further improved the already very good arrangements for the care provided for all pupils and staff. The quality of provision is now excellent and it is a significant strength of the school. It is evident in all aspects of the work of the school, providing for the wellbeing, safety and security of the whole school community. The school

provides excellent guidance for pupils in their academic and personal development from the time they start in the lower school to the time they leave.

55. The school has continued to develop the established and very significant ethos of pastoral care. It is clearly understood by pupils, who both benefit from it and contribute to it, playing a significant role in ensuring there is support for any pupil who needs it. The excellent arrangements for care permeate all aspects of the school's work and embrace the needs of all staff and pupils. The school provides an adult counsellor, accessible to all pupils. In addition, the older pupils are trained as counsellors and mentors for the middle and lower school pupils. This ensures that the extensive support structure, consisting of the heads of lower, middle and upper school, together with heads of year, form tutors and heads of department, is underpinned by the pupils themselves. It is remarkably sensitive to the pupils' needs and examples were seen during the inspection week of younger pupils naturally and unselfconsciously turning to older pupil mentors for help and advice out of lesson times.
56. Career guidance and support facilities are now very well established and are exemplary. The part-time, on-site careers adviser and the careers services provided by school staff include very effective advice and support on an individual basis, tailored to the needs of each pupil. The careers adviser shares his time between the girls' and boys' grammar schools and so is able to concentrate on providing advice and information appropriate to the needs of grammar school pupils. He visits universities, for example, to ascertain how suitable the courses and support are for the candidates he is guiding. The result is a very specialised level of support of high quality.
57. Since the last inspection, the school has established excellent procedures for ensuring the safety of its community and, in particular, the health and safety of its pupils. Health and safety are promoted very effectively. They are very well managed and regularly reviewed. Security cameras provide complete coverage of the site and are continuously monitored by the reception staff. Emergency telephones, for use both by staff and pupils, are strategically placed in all the buildings. Child protection procedures are also excellent, with very well trained staff and very well established practice in the school. This aspect of care is very well managed. Appropriate local agencies are consulted very effectively when there are needs.
58. The promotion of good behaviour is established now as an excellent aspect of the work of the school and the staff, pupils and parents are very clear about the school's expectations. These are now established so well that the monitoring of behaviour needs only a light touch, as pupils aspire to the highest standards expected of them. This underpins the caring atmosphere the school community enjoys and ensures that aggressive or racist outbursts are virtually unknown. Pupils reported to the team that there is no bullying in the school, parents are very pleased with the high standards of behaviour and there have been no exclusions for many years. The high quality of guidance, care and promotion and monitoring of good behaviour make a significant contribution to the quality of education in the school and standards of achievement.
59. Since the last inspection, the promotion and monitoring of attendance have improved further and are now well established through an excellent and highly effective system throughout the school. Pupils and parents are equally clear about what the school expects for attendance, punctuality, authorisation of absence and truancy. As a result of this and the very effective monitoring, there is no unauthorised absence. The highly effective monitoring arrangements ensure that the school can react to any issue very quickly, which they do particularly well on the very rare occasions of truancy from lessons. The co-operation and work of the educational welfare officer is a very good support to the school. The school is good at supporting pupils with work to complete at home if they are unable to attend school.
60. The standard of care of the premises and grounds is very good. All members of staff work hard to maintain a clean attractive environment that adds to the welcoming atmosphere of the whole school. The staff has worked hard to decorate parts of the school and has started to maintain a rolling programme of upgrading areas. The task is made more challenging because of the scattered distribution of school buildings, the leaks from some of the roofs and the use of 'temporary' mobile buildings.

Assessment

61. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and recording pupils' progress. The school's policy for assessment is both thorough and comprehensive and gives clear guidelines

to departments. The adherence to these guidelines, however, is still, as at the last inspection, not consistent across all departments.

62. The systems in place are very well understood by both pupils and teachers and are effective in improving pupils' attitudes towards their learning. Form tutors, heads of year and senior staff are involved in tracking the progress of pupils through the school, identifying potential high attainers and underachievers.
63. The school identifies pupils' achievement and potential using National Foundation for Educational Research tests, reading tests, National Curriculum levels in each subject and pupils' Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results, as well as data from internal assessments and examinations. These provide a very thorough analysis of every pupil's levels of attainment. The school also now carries out sophisticated analyses of GCSE and Key Stage 3 results. In addition, formal assessment during Key Stage 4 and A level courses is carried out well, in accordance with examination board requirements. Individual education plans give descriptions of pupils' special educational needs and targets to be addressed in all lessons. These are written in clear terms, which make it easy to measure pupils' progress.
64. Since the last inspection the school has been very successful in establishing systematic monitoring, evaluation and review procedures, so that the experiences and attainments of all pupils can be better analysed. The school now uses records from primary schools very effectively to ensure that pupils' strengths and needs are known to staff from the moment of their entry to the school.
65. Form tutors and heads of year carry out reviews of progress with each pupil every term and, where there is cause for concern, at more frequent intervals. Parents value the information this gives them about their children. Pupils are encouraged to set their own targets and evaluate their progress towards them. All teachers are given access to the information held about pupils. Departments make good use of this information to help pupils improve their standards. A recently formed Assessment Working Party is reviewing assessment procedures in accordance with the school's development plan for the next three years.
66. The care and provision of appropriate facilities for pupils with special educational needs are well documented. Statements and records are organised well and meet statutory requirements. Appropriate agencies and specialists are consulted and used effectively. General targets are set and are appropriate to the needs of pupils. Management of procedures and pupils' welfare is excellent. The special needs co-ordinator works closely with the governing body and the policy is regularly reviewed and updated.
67. Overall, the systems and procedures for assessment are of high quality and generally effective. All teachers mark carefully and accurately. Not all give clear, written guidance on how pupils can improve their work further. Similarly, some departments use well the very good assessment information available to them to identify the high attaining pupils and ensure that they are set appropriately challenging work and therefore make good progress. This is not yet true of all departments, however. Where it is done well, it has a very positive influence on the levels these pupils reach at the end of both key stages.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

68. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to enjoy the confidence and considerable support of parents. The positive messages that parents pass on to their children help the school to maintain both the very high levels of behaviour and the very positive attitudes to school and work that are a key to its success. The school has very good links with parents, although these are hampered in some instances by the distance that some parents live from the school. Parental involvement is generally very good. They are kept very well informed by a very good range of school information and communications. Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning at home by checking homework, providing additional learning resources and guidance when possible.
69. Parents show a strong commitment to the school through the support they provide through good levels of attendance at meetings for parents, support for school activities, such as trips and clubs, and school functions, such as concerts or productions. The very successful fund raising and social activities organised by the parent/teacher association show the keen interest parents take in supporting the school. They have made worthwhile contributions to its learning resources and supported improvements in care and its activities in the community.

70. The effectiveness of links with parents is very good. There are well-established links between staff and parents. Parents know that the school is open and welcoming. This is very well promoted through school documentation. The significant effort teachers and administrative staff make to know and understand all the pupils and their families creates a close and valuable bond between home and school. The large majority of parents feels that the school works closely with them. There is a small, but significant, minority who would like the relationship to be closer than it is, because they live some distance from the school or because they work full-time and cannot be contacted easily.
71. The impact of parental involvement is good. They support school initiatives to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality. They have a positive commitment to work with the school to maintain high standards of behaviour. Parents are very anxious to encourage pupils to complete their homework and their diary planners. Through their involvement in attending school to review their children's work or for option or careers meetings, they show that they have a very high level of interest in the work of the school and how they can help their children to succeed. Parents of special educational needs pupils are fully involved in the reviews of their progress. The annual report to parents meets statutory requirements and gives comprehensive information about special needs provision.
72. The school continues to produce information of high quality for parents and pupils. Parents receive information that tells them about all aspects of the school's expectations, the educational provision and the achievements of pupils. The school brochure, newsletters and governors' annual reports to parents are very well produced. The Year 7 induction package and documentation, Year 9 options and careers information are other very good sources of information. Pupils' annual school reports are above average in quality and very informative. They are very good indicators of what pupils can do, of how they can improve and they give the targets agreed as they move through the school. At the end of key stages, parents have a detailed statement of the National Curriculum levels achieved by their children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

73. The last report noted that the school had an effective senior management team and a supportive governing body. There were serious criticisms, however, of school development planning and the role of the governors in the identification of priorities, in the development of a shared vision and the establishment of an appropriate management structure. The role of and the support for middle managers needed to be reviewed, because they had not time to carry out their responsibilities. Statutory requirements were not being met for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all and for the teaching of religious education in the senior school.
74. Good progress has been made. Development planning is now good. It has been improved in departments and the school as a whole for a number of reasons. Effective management and leadership have led to improved communication with governors and all members of staff. As a result, there is common understanding of whole-school aims and values. Effective professional development has ensured an agreed and consistent approach to the process of planning. The school still does not meet all the statutory requirements indicated in the last report, but progress has been made. Religious education is taught now in the senior school to Year 12, but not yet to Year 13, though this is planned for next year. The amount of time for religious education in Year 10 is below that recommended, but the Agreed Syllabus is covered. *A Thought for the Day* has been introduced to supplement the three assemblies a week for each year group.
75. The quality of leadership is very good overall. The headteacher, along with the rest of the senior management team, is providing excellent leadership in setting a clear educational direction for the work of the school. She has both a clear vision for its future, a vision in which little else but excellence will be accepted, and an informed, balanced and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Her considerable skills, experience, wisdom and tenacity ensure that issues are addressed once they have been identified and the rigorous monitoring and regular review of the work of the school by the senior team ensures that any areas for development are identified swiftly. The school was operating with only one deputy at the time of the inspection. Her deputy complements her well, bringing excellent management skills to support the headteacher's charismatic leadership, along with a rigorous and thorough understanding of every aspect of the school's work and the trust and confidence of the staff.

Both have high expectations of all the adults who work in the school, tempered with loyalty and care for them. This is a very caring school and the tone is set by senior management and the pastoral staff. The high expectations and care that they have for teachers is a model for the concern and expectations all teachers have for the children in their care. Very good management systems and good communications have led to shared ideals and the staff is very much a team, working together and contributing fully to departmental and whole-school development. Most school policies are consistently implemented as a result and there is a consistently good learning environment across the whole school. This is a difficult thing to achieve on a scattered site, where departments are isolated from each other in many separate buildings, in which the physical quality of the environment ranges from satisfactory to almost unacceptable. Pupils are sometimes cramped in out-of-date and overcrowded science laboratories, or isolated in music practice rooms where water leaks through the roof. Their attitudes and work rate, however, are unaffected, because the staff has consistently high expectations; set, monitored and driven by the leadership of the school.

76. The systems in place for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and curriculum development, at a senior management team level, are rigorous and effective. There are regular reviews of teaching led by a member of the senior management team, department by department, and reviews of work in exercise books both as part of a planned monitoring cycle and in response to concerns raised by heads of department or parents. There is detailed feedback to individual teachers and to subject areas. Where necessary, targets are set, further monitoring planned and carried out and professional development prioritised. The outcomes of monitoring are reflected in the priorities set in the whole-school development plan as well as in department planning.
77. The governing body is also involved. Governors are linked to departments and visit the school to take part in development planning. They are invited to review the strategic planning in their linked departments. The monitoring role of the governing body is developing well, but is still at a relatively early stage of its development. The governors do not always focus sufficiently clearly on their prescribed areas of responsibility. Some governors have adapted to their role well, but some are still growing into it.
78. The effectiveness of the monitoring process is evident in the considerable improvements in teaching, learning and standards since the last report. It has led to increased consistency in lesson planning and teaching, as well as more consistent implementation of school policies for teaching and learning. Teachers are aware of the criteria that are being used to monitor the quality of their work in the classroom. The criteria for success are shared, and include all the characteristics of effective teaching, such as appropriate pace and the effective use of assessment to help pupils improve their work. However, there still are inconsistencies and these are in departments where there has not been regular monitoring of teaching by middle managers to support the work of the senior management team. Where heads of department or subject are teaching at the same time as the rest of their teachers, they need to find ways of monitoring teachers' work without the need to observe them directly, through regular scrutiny of exercise books, for example, and team teaching, in order to be aware of strengths and weaknesses in their departments and to share best practice.
79. Governors are supportive. Most know the school well and give readily of their time. They liaise effectively with the senior management team and participate in the setting of the school development plan as well as the budget, and seek to link the two effectively. The finance group helps to monitor the budget, and has begun to monitor the effectiveness of major budget decisions. Some of the governors have specific strengths and skills to bring to their work, and overall the governors fulfil their role satisfactorily.
80. Most heads of department, heads of subject and year heads provide very effective leadership, giving clear direction to the work of teachers in their charge. Policies and schemes of work provide good guidance for their work. The organisation and administration of departments and year teams are generally areas of strength and help to ensure that the work of the school runs smoothly. Overall, there is a good ethos and a commitment to high achievement, but it is not consistently good in every department or classroom.
81. The management of provision for special educational needs is very good and the management of the teaching of pupils for whom English is an additional language is good. The special educational needs policy meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. The register of special educational needs is accurate, and the records of identified pupils are well kept. Pupils

on the register have individual education plans, drawn up well, with very appropriate targets that are set and reviewed regularly. They are well integrated into the life of the school. Identification procedures are efficient and teachers have good access to a special needs information board in the staff room and a comprehensive register in all departments, updated regularly. Pupils are interviewed each term and progress and targets are effectively reviewed. Pupils on the special needs register taking GCSE and A level examinations receive effective extra support. Statutory requirements for pupils with statements are met, with annual and interim reviews. The management of equal opportunities is good. Equality of opportunity is implicit in the school's ethos and the documentation of most departments indicates awareness of the need to provide equality of opportunity for all. The performance of pupils in tests and examinations is monitored thoroughly and the tutorial programme offers pupils the opportunity to consider issues relating to self-esteem, stereotyping and prejudice.

Efficiency

82. Since the last inspection the school has addressed the issues presented in the report regarding the management and systems for identifying and expediting priorities for development. There is now excellent financial control.
83. Financial planning is excellent. Educational priorities are very well supported through an effective school development plan, very tight financial control and careful strategic management of key areas of the budget. Specific grants, such as the National Grid for Learning fund, are used for the specific purposes they are provided. They are closely budgeted and monitored. Financial planning takes very effective account of the level of funding that has placed significant constraints on the budget. All members of staff with management responsibilities have played a significant part in helping to manage the budget and determining the best priorities for the school to maintain its high level of success. The school makes good use of new technology for management of its financial resources, which it uses to ensure that the governors are well informed about the finances on a regular basis. The school uses the Local Education Authority consultancy services to help them to apply the principles of best value. Overall, taking into account the cost per pupil, the high standards of education the school provides and the progress that pupils make, the school provides very good value for money.

Accommodation

84. Little has changed since the last inspection regarding the quality and range of the accommodation. The school still manages very well the use of the accommodation, but the quality of it still has an adverse affect on some areas of the curriculum.
85. The accommodation overall is satisfactory, but it is only through the very effective management of the available accommodation and the very good attitudes of the pupils and staff that the negative impact on pupils' achievements is minimised. The school's main building contains inadequate classroom facilities for the provision of a fully effective science curriculum. The scattered mobile classrooms, none of which has any toilet provision, present many challenges for teachers and staff, especially in inclement weather. The shared sports hall presents challenges in terms of managing its use in conjunction with the adjoining school and in the management of pupils as they move to and from the facilities. Their very good behaviour and enthusiasm for the activities ensure that this is done successfully and relatively little time is taken, even in poor weather conditions. The inefficient heating and the extreme variations in the temperature levels in the 'mobile' temporary classrooms affect the comfort of pupils and staff, as does the water that drips onto pupils as they work in the music practice rooms and the drama studio.

Learning resources

86. The level of expenditure on learning resources is at about the national average. It is appropriate and there is, overall, a satisfactory range of learning resources to support the teaching and leaning of all subjects. The provision of textbooks is generally satisfactory across the school.
87. The quality of learning resources varies over different subject areas. For music, whilst there is a quite good provision of instruments, there is unsatisfactory provision of software and a lack of attractive books in the library for Key Stage 3 pupils. Religious education has a good selection of video- and audiotapes, together with artefacts from the world's major faiths, but has insufficient books for home study for the GCSE short course.

88. The ratio of computers to pupils, at 1:8, is in line with the national average. The school has Internet access and all pupils have their own e-mail addresses. There are some shortages of software in science and art. The library is used well by pupils, especially at breaks and at lunchtimes. Student librarians and the assistant librarian make a useful contribution by helping to run the library at these times. Senior school students use the library for private study and the English department has a rota for bringing pupils to the library once a week. Despite some increase in expenditure over recent years - heads of department were, as part of the 1998/99 budget allocation, given £500 each to buy reference books - the proportion of new books is low. Although the total number of books is above the recommended level, a random scan of books on the shelves showed that a significant proportion are over twenty-five years old. The new librarian is in the process of putting the stock list onto computer and is building up a comprehensive CD-ROM collection.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

89. In order to continue to improve and to raise levels of attainment and the quality of education in the school even further, the governors, headteacher and teaching staff, with the support of the Local Education Authority, should:
- evaluate the successful strategies used by those departments that attain a high proportion of A* and A passes at GCSE and adapt them in other subject areas to raise the attainment of the more able pupils. This will involve more specific planning of programmes of work for these pupils to extend their knowledge and skills (paragraphs 8, 29, 34, 41, 133, 139, 152, 159, 167, 183.);
 - continue their efforts to improve the accommodation and resourcing of the school, including the science laboratories and food technology room, which are out-of-date and overcrowded, the music practice rooms, which are isolated and not weatherproof, and all the other rooms that let in rain. Some parts of the school do not provide an acceptable or healthy environment for learning and this has a negative impact on standards. There are shortages of information and technology equipment and software that are affecting the coverage of the programmes of study and depressing standards in a number of subjects, including science (paragraphs 38, 75, 84, 85, 87, 103, 117, 134, 141, 146, 165, 170, 192, 200, 201).

90. Other areas for development, noted by the inspection team, that the governors may wish to include in their action plan, but not picked out as key issues are:
- the need to spread to all departments the very good practice that exists in a small number for the use of the evaluation of the monitoring of teaching and learning to share and spread the best practice in order to improve teaching even further (paragraphs 78, 80, 155, 162, 199);
 - the need to ensure that the strategies for marking and assessment identified in school policies are implemented consistently across the school (paragraphs 61, 67, 144, 162, 170, 191, 199);
 - The shortage of time for teaching religious education in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form (paragraphs 37, 74, 206, 207).

Senior school (Sixth Form)

91. The school is philosophically committed to an open entry policy, both for pupils from within the school and from other local schools, with no testing on entry. There are minimum entry requirements in some subjects, but overall the main criterion for acceptance is that a student may be expected to benefit from the combination of courses chosen.
92. The quality and range of the learning opportunities offered to senior school students are good, although the statutory requirements for the provision of religious education are not met. The curriculum is broad and well-balanced, with 22 subjects offered at A and A/S level at Highsted, with the addition of six or seven others at Borden Grammar and Fulston Manor Schools. GNVQ has recently been offered at Fulston Manor, but the 'take-up' is, as yet, low. In addition, a GCSE course in Latin is offered. The courses attract viable numbers, including some from other schools and mature students from the local community. These arrangements, combined with careful timetabling, enable most students to study their chosen combination of subjects, including a mixture of arts and science subjects, with very few exceptions.
93. A number of additional subjects are offered to senior school students, for example government and politics and sociology, and these greatly broaden the opportunities for students. The teaching in these subjects is good or very good and, in the case of sociology in particular, encourages very good skills of independent study and self-evaluation. Some students pursue these new areas later in higher education, and overall the school prepares students well for the next stage of education.
94. In addition to the 'formal' curriculum, students are able to study, and to involve themselves in, a range of other areas. In Year 12, the complementary studies course covers personal, social and health related matters, with the addition of careers and employment advice. In Year 13, general studies is offered as a structured self-study course, which, this year, can be taken as an A level. The opportunities for other extra-curricular activities are as good in the sixth form as in the rest of the school, including study trips abroad. The curriculum is enriched further by the school's policy of encouraging students to take responsibility. Notable strengths here are the pupil mentoring system, where over fifty senior school students assist staff in offering study and social support to girls in the lower school, and the initiative shown by students in finding work experience and other links with the community.
95. The issue of standards in the senior school is complex. In attainment in external exams over the last three years, the trend has been slightly downward since the last inspection for pupils taking two or more A levels or equivalent. The average points score per pupil for that period is now close to the national average. The score for students taking less than two A level equivalent remains above average. This is explained by the combined effects of the school's open entry policy and its past policy of not entering students for general studies. In many schools where students enter general studies as an additional A level subject, this has the effect of raising the average points score per pupil. The policy on entry for general studies has been changed this year, and mock results imply that most students are likely to do well. Generally students achieve well in the senior school in comparison to their previous attainment and to their perceived ability.

96. Students' past attainment in external exams does not reflect the standards of attainment observed in lessons, which were generally above average. Nor does it accurately reflect the good, very good and sometimes excellent teaching seen in lessons. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers plan well, use a variety of methods and require, and achieve, high standards from students. Resultant strengths are students' obvious confidence, enthusiasm, maturity and verbal skills. They work hard, appreciate their teachers' efforts and take the same pride in their work evident from pupils throughout the school. A weaker area is a tendency from some pupils to put too much reliance on mechanistic and over-detailed note taking. This is sometimes accompanied by problems in seeing how to respond to written questions when the structure of the answer is not supplied by a teacher. Tutors and teachers do encourage and promote independent learning skills, but there is, as yet, a lack of consistency in methods used. The new general studies self-study approach is sound and this is likely to support other curriculum areas in the long-term. The tutor team and curriculum are well led and imaginatively managed, and good plans have been made in response to nationally driven changes to the senior school curriculum.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | 170 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 41 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 10 | 40 | 38 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | Y7 – Y11 | Y12 – Y13 |
|---|----------|-----------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 600 | 205 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 22 | 0 |

| Special educational needs | Y7 – Y11 | Y12 – Y13 |
|---|----------|-----------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 1 | 1 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 14 | 0 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 12 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 11 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 10 |

Attendance

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|---------------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|
| | % | | % |
| School data | 4.1 | School data | 0.0 |
| National comparative data | 7.9 | National comparative data | 1.1 |

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | 1999 | N/a | 107 | 107 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | N/a | N/a | N/a |
| | Girls | 106 | 106 | 106 |
| | Total | 106 | 99 | 99 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 99 (100) | 99 (100) | 99 (100) |
| | National | 63 (57) | 62 (56) | 55 (56) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 85 (100) | 97 (95) | 73 (90) |
| | National | 28 (31) | 38 (36) | 23 (28) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|----------|-------------|-----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | N/a | N/a | N/a |
| | Girls | 106 | 107 | 107 |
| | Total | 106 | 107 | 107 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 99 (100) | 100 (100) | 100 (100) |
| | National | 64 (57) | 64 (56) | 60 (56) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 81 (71) | 94 (94) | 88 (97) |
| | National | 31 (26) | 37 (34) | 28 (21) |

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year | 1999 | N/a | 110 | 110 |

| GCSE results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|---|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified | Boys | N/a | N/a | N/a |
| | Girls | 109 | 109 | 109 |
| | Total | 109 | 109 | 109 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 99 (94) | 99 (98) | 99 (98) |
| | National | 46.3 (46.3) | 90.7 (87.5) | 95.7 (93.4) |

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School | 57 (51.8) |
| | National | 37.8 (37) |

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 |
| Indian | 8 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 3 |
| Chinese | 2 |
| White | 782 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 10 |

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 | 0 |
| Indian | 0 | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 |
| White | 0 | 0 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 0 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 47.2 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 17.1 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 17 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 362 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 75.7 |
|---|------|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|-------------|----|
| Key Stage 3 | 28 |
| Key Stage 4 | 22 |

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Financial year | 1998-99 |
|----------------|---------|

| | £ |
|--|--------|
| Total income | 184082 |
| Total expenditure | 183880 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2319 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 10854 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 12875 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 750 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 273 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 43 | 51 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 51 | 46 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 47 | 48 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 26 | 58 | 13 | 2 | 1 |
| The teaching is good. | 42 | 52 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 34 | 46 | 15 | 3 | 1 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 48 | 41 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 71 | 26 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 28 | 51 | 13 | 3 | 5 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 41 | 50 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 47 | 46 | 5 | 0 | 2 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 40 | 44 | 7 | 1 | 8 |

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

97. The attainment of pupils in English on entry to the school is above average. Standardised tests and selective entry tests show that most pupils' attainment in reading and writing is above average at the start of Year 7. Only a very small percentage of pupils has special educational needs and there are only three pupils for whom English is an additional language. At the end of Key Stage 3 in the National Curriculum tests in 1999, 99% attained level 5 or above and 85% reached level 6 or above, with 24% reaching level 7. These results were very high in comparison with the national average and the average nationally for girls, though broadly in line with those for grammar schools. Progress through the key stage is rapid, with pupils moving up often more than two National Curriculum levels in their first three years at the school. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils can speak with confidence and begin to acquire a sense of formal register, though this is the least well developed of their skills. Progress in this area was clearly to be seen in a Year 7 lesson observed, where pupils were holding 'radio' interviews with characters after studying the story of Theseus and the Minotaur. They can convey ideas with relevance and illustration and argue convincingly. Pupils can read fluently for enjoyment as well as for work. They read with an increasingly high degree of comprehension, and often with good expression. Pupils' written work is of a high standard, showing the ability to write thoughtfully and an understanding of many genres. Presentation is generally neat and attractive to read. Pupils write lucidly about views expressed in the media and show understanding of and empathy with Shakespearean characters, as well as being able to form their own coherent judgements. Written work develops well, both in technique and in content. A lesson observed in Year 7, on 'Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH', was a very good example of literature being combined with information retrieval and methods of writing up scientific data, to good cross-curricular effect.
98. At Key Stage 4, the quality of work again often increases by more than two National Curriculum levels within one key stage. Many pupils show particular commitment and are ready to work hard, with thought and care. Pupils of all levels of ability make good progress. GCSE results in English in 1999 were very high in comparison with the national averages, and broadly in line with those for similar schools. 100 per cent of pupils achieved grades A* - C. Similar standards have been sustained over the last three years. In English literature in 1999, also, 100 per cent attained grades A* - C. A particularly high proportion, 70 per cent, of pupils achieved grades A* and A. English results fell very slightly last year, after a steady rise in the two previous years, but not significantly and English literature results have risen consistently over the last three years. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils are developing a wider variety of register, learning to choose the mode of speech appropriate for the occasion. They can argue, debate and express clear opinions on literature and on written styles in media work. They read Shakespeare with understanding, as observed in a Year 10 lesson on 'Macbeth'. They use good comprehension skills and have the ability to see the sub-text of what they read and to understand nuances such as those in 'A Dance in the Shadow of Death', an article in the examination booklet being studied by Year 11 pupils. They write in a sustained and concentrated manner, using initiative and good research skills.
99. At A level, in 1999, 100 per cent of students achieved grades A - E, above course averages for all girls' schools and for all schools nationally. This was despite the department's policy of allowing some pupils who do not attain the highest grades at GCSE to take the subject for A level. By the age of 19, pupils speak in a mature and adult fashion, choosing their words with care and looking for the most persuasive ways of expressing themselves. They read texts from all periods avidly. Although they need guidance on how to approach texts, they are capable of extracting much of the meaning for themselves, as seen in a Year 13 lesson where students were examining Jeni Couzin's poem, 'I and Wolverine', with intelligence and perception. They write with a wide vocabulary range and they use critical terms freely and coherently, demonstrated well in a Year 13 lesson on 'Paradise Lost'. Above all, they show initiative in researching topics for themselves, as observed in an A level group working on 'The Changeling'. Throughout the senior school, progress is good. Pupils learn to work with independence, interest, and an increasing ease of familiarity with texts. Teachers convey much of their enthusiasm for the subject to pupils and are not disappointed in their reactions. For the last three years, all pupils have achieved A - E grades at A level.

100. Standards of attainment are very high at both key stages and above average at A level. Good examples of extension work were seen in the coursework of the higher attainers, showing that they had been carefully guided to reach their full potential. In general, progress is very good and it is excellent in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress, because of the goodwill and effort of their teachers, who take great trouble to ensure that their needs are met. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also make good progress.
101. The attitudes of pupils at all levels are very good. They listen to their teachers and fellow pupils well and treat the opinions of others with thought and respect. Levels of concentration and perseverance are extremely good, as is pupils' motivation to study on their own initiative. At Key Stage 4, there are many examples of pupils who provide significant time and energy in order to produce good results and who take great pride in their work. In the sixth form, pupils demonstrate a high sense of responsibility towards their work. Relationships with teachers are very good, with an ethos of mutual respect permeating all lessons. Tolerance is a strong feature of lessons; pupils are eager to listen to the ideas of teachers and others and to come to thoughtful conclusions. The courtesy and good humour of the pupils make them a pleasure to teach and to observe. The level of personal development evident in pupils' enjoyment of the subject and the ways in which good study habits develop are excellent.
102. Teaching is good at Key Stage 4 and very good elsewhere. The quality of teaching is making a marked impact on pupils' progress, especially in the sixth form and at GCSE. The department concentrates on teaching the skills of English through a variety of methods, but primarily through the opportunities for purposeful discussion, individual research and informed reading and writing that the study of good literature provides. This is significantly improving the development of reading skills, the acquisition of a sensitive response to novels, plays and poems and the understanding of the way in which authors use language to create effects. The teaching of English is very good overall. Over three-quarters of the lessons observed were good or very good and, in one case, excellent. The remainder were satisfactory and there were no unsatisfactory lessons. Teaching is better at Key Stage 3 and at A level than in Key Stage 4, where teachers do not always use the variety of stimulating methods as in Key Stage 3 classes. The best lessons are those where the teacher has an excellent knowledge of the subject, conveying interest, excitement and enthusiasm to the pupils and where clear targets are set and reinforced by good classroom management. In these lessons, expectations are high, the pupils are constantly being challenged and all receive very good advice, support and attention. Teachers have very good grasp of the subject. Schemes of work have been devised that help teachers to plan across parallel classes within a year, while keeping some autonomy over their methods and approaches. Lesson plans are very well focused, with clear objectives. They contain opportunities for practice of all modes of language teaching, especially oral work, and particular attention is, rewardingly, paid to literature. Teachers' expectations of pupils are realistic and very high. Where extension work is given in Year 9 and in Year 13, it is eagerly accepted. Teaching methods are usually varied and appropriate, differing from teacher to teacher. The standard of discipline and management is very good. The ethos of the school penetrates the lessons, the pupils are motivated and pleasant and classes are managed through friendly relations and respect. Time, too, is generally well used, with balance and a brisk pace. Assessment of pupils is made constantly, formally and informally, and homework is used to very good effect and is always done thoroughly and with a high level of effort. All these factors ensure that pupils make good progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding.
103. The very experienced head of department has skilfully nurtured a highly successful and committed department. Teaching is regularly monitored and good classroom practice is shared through team teaching. Professional development of teachers ensures that the present high level of subject expertise is maintained. The curriculum is well planned and appropriate. Pupils' progress is rigorously monitored and used to set future targets. The head of department has very ably drawn together and trained her team of teachers in order to sustain attainment at its present high level and there is a strong drive, under her leadership, towards ever higher levels of achievement. Resources in the department are just adequate. Although there is a wide range of inviting fiction in the library and a reasonable supply of reference books, there is little opportunity for pupils to use information technology as an integral part of the subject and there are too few other technological resources. Accommodation, too, is no better than adequate, since classrooms are cramped for the size of classes and the temporary building, which houses the English suite of rooms, is outside the main school buildings and possesses no amenities, such as cloakrooms. The roof leaks. The size and nature of the rooms

give teachers little opportunity to teach drama as well as they would like, because space is so restricted.

104. The last inspection report commended the standards of the department, which have since risen even higher at GCSE. Comment on the persistent problem of poor spelling no longer has any relevance; written work showed good levels of spelling, punctuation and syntax. Teaching, which was sound or better at the last inspection, is now generally good or better. It was noted that the English staff had too many responsibilities. They still have many roles within the department and the school, but these do not seem in any way to detract from their efficacy as English teachers. Resources, except for those in information technology, were judged to be good, rather than the present judgement of just satisfactory. This is a department that is maintaining its very high standards and, indeed, improving upon them. It is a strength in the school.

ATTAINMENT AND PROGRESS IN LITERACY

105. There are, in most subjects, good examples of writing for a variety of purposes across the curriculum. Good, extended writing is evident at all levels in English, humanities, art, and science subjects and throughout the senior school. Recording and reporting skills are well developed in science. In all key stages and all subjects written work is characterised by good spelling, sentence structure and grammar. At Key Stage 3, pupils already present work well and write in a sustained manner. At Key Stage 4 the majority of pupils can read for research and gist and summarise points well. In the sixth form, there is a great deal of sophisticated and structured work of a highly articulate nature.
106. Presentation is good throughout all key stages, particularly in the case of higher attaining pupils and in the sixth form, though most pupils usually reach a good standard by the end of Key Stage 3.
107. Speaking and listening skills are well developed at all stages, with teachers working hard at providing good role models for formal register and appropriate styles of speech. Almost all pupils are able to argue and debate in an articulate fashion. There are examples across all subjects of pupils listening to and engaging in technical language when in classroom situations, such as mathematics, English, science and humanities. Pupils learn to express their ideas fluently and thoughtfully in their writing, using a wide vocabulary. The school stresses these skills and is successful in attaining high levels of competence in them.
108. Reading in lessons is often good or very good, though a small proportion of pupils read aloud with too little expression and too rapidly, thus inhibiting full comprehension. Pupils generally read well for comprehension and are able to note and understand different styles employed for different purposes. Scanning skills are well developed and the skills of reading for understanding are generally good and often very good.
109. The degree of literacy encouraged and promoted in the school has a very significant beneficial impact on pupils' attainment and progress.

DRAMA

110. Many pupils enter the school with little or no experience of drama. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in drama are high compared with most schools. Most pupils acquire the basic techniques and strategies satisfactorily. They gain much practice in collaborating, negotiating and working towards group decisions. Pupils become aware of their patterns of speech and are afforded the opportunity to develop their understanding of tone and appropriate style of the spoken word. Progress is good. Pupils respond very well to the difficult tasks they are set, planning group and pair improvisations, creating roles in character and working on carefully developed and stretching units of work. They show an increasing knowledge of and ability to use techniques for dramatic effects such as freeze framing, monologue and hot-seating. They discuss and evaluate their work seriously and rationally. A Year 9 class, approaching monologues from 'The Roses of Eyam' made perceptive judgements about the feelings and emotions of the characters they were studying.

111. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results are good and higher than the national average, with an impressive proportion of pupils achieving high grades. In 1999, the pupils achieved 99.5% A* - C. grades and 100% A* - G. This high standard has been developed since the last inspection report, in which the subject was not reported. Pupils are able to use a wide range of dramatic devices and have a good understanding of the demands of empathetic understanding of character and the technical skills of costume, lighting and make-up. Their grasp of performance skills, however, is sometimes slower to develop. Pupils work well together, supporting each other with enthusiasm and self-confidence. In their work, pupils showed a high level of maturity and concentration. Progress is good and pupils make positive contributions to discussion and decision-making.
112. The A level students build on the sound work they have done previously in the school and are making steady progress with complex texts and dramatic genres. Their work shows imagination and vigour. Pupils develop a high level of discipline, control and co-operation, evident in a Year 12 lesson in which groups were developing their own plots and dramatic structures for improvisation. These students use forms and conventions well to express ideas and feelings, building satisfactorily on their knowledge and experience. In 1999, in the A level Theatre Studies examination, the school achieved an 80 per cent A – G pass rate, compared with a national average of 90 per cent. It should, however, be noted that the school admits students from neighbouring schools to join this course and demands no previous experience in the subject.
113. Throughout the school, pupils are interested and take a pride in their work in drama. It is a popular subject. They are well behaved and hard working and show a high level of enthusiasm for drama activities. They listen well to the teacher and to each other. They are adaptable and support each other well in collaborative acting and evaluations. Keen to improve, they respond well to feedback and suggestions.
114. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory and good overall. The bulk of teaching in the subject is done by the drama specialist, though a good deal of teaching in Key Stage 3 is shared by English subject teachers, who see drama as playing an essential part in their subject, as well as a worthwhile subject in its own right. It is characterised by enjoyment of the subject, high expectations, thorough planning and rigorous support and challenge to all pupils. The pace of lessons is usually brisk and targets for attainment are clear. The evaluation and feedback by both pupils and teachers are strong features of all lessons. The teachers are hardworking and committed and this helps to create a positive ethos in the subject.
115. All pupils take drama in Key Stage 3, which helps to a very great extent with their self-awareness, poise and personal and social development, as well as speech skills. However, at GCSE, option settings preclude pupils from taking more than one arts subject and pupils who take two modern foreign languages are also unable to do drama. This limits numbers on the course and denies opportunity for some pupils to continue with the valuable work done in Key Stage 3. Extra-curricular drama, however, provides wide opportunities, featuring flourishing after school clubs, large scale annual performances, as well as the presentations given by examination students at GCSE and A level. In addition, pupils have good opportunities to visit the professional theatre. Assessment is well developed. Good systems are in place and they are used effectively both to monitor individual pupils' progress and to help modify schemes of work.
116. The leadership of the subject area is strong. The experienced specialist leads by example and uses to good effect the expertise and co-operation of the teachers within the English department who also teach drama. There is clearly a shared educational direction and common purpose within the teaching of the subject. Clear policies and carefully documented assessment procedures inform development and high quality detailed schemes of work offer a secure framework for all staff and important links with the programmes of study for speaking and listening in the National Curriculum for English. The working ethos of the subject area makes a positive contribution to the social, moral and cultural life of the school.
117. Basic materials and resources are adequate. Although there is a useful drama studio, it is too small for the large classes in Key Stage 3. Many Key Stage 3 lessons have to be taught in English classrooms, which are too small for the purpose. This restraint hinders performance and movement skills, the area that needs the most development in the future. The subject area makes a good contribution to the aims and ethos of the school.

MATHEMATICS

118. Standards of attainment in mathematics are very high. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3, the proportion who reached level 5 and above was 99 per cent, which is well above the national average of 62 per cent. The proportion of pupils who reached level 6 and above was 97 per cent, which is considerably higher than the corresponding national average of 38 per cent. The trend over the last three years, in terms of average National Curriculum points score, is broadly in line with the national picture. Standards are below average in comparison with those of schools classed as grammar schools nationally.
119. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in the 1999 GCSE was 97 percent, which is very high compared to the national average of 46 percent. Standards at GCSE over the last three years have been very high. The proportion of pupils reaching the very highest grades (A* and A) is well above the national average and has increased every year for the last six years. Standards are average in comparison with other grammar schools.
120. In the 1999 A level examination, standards were close to the national average in terms of mean points score and above when considering the proportion of passes (A to E grades) - which was 100 per cent. For the last three years the proportion of A to E grades reached and the mean points scored have both been at least average and usually above. A few students take the A/S level mathematics examination each year. The proportion of A to E grades reached by these students is consistently above the national average.
121. Standards on entry, based on Key Stage 2 test results and other nationally standardised tests, are above average in mathematics. The levels of attainment of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are very good by the end of Key Stage 3. At the end of Key Stage 4, the attainment of pupils is also very good. Achievement in Year 12 and Year 13 is good for all students.
122. The standards of the work seen in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are very good. The tests and examination results are higher than the standards of attainment observed at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 during the inspection, but the present pupils are on line to attain very high standards by the end of the key stages.
123. Pupils work hard and are invariably well behaved. They co-operate with each other when working together and get on very well in the classroom. Attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils sustain high levels of concentration, persevere with problems and are keen to answer questions and to participate fully in lessons. Pupils and students are very aware of what is expected from them and of the need to maintain progress. Their very positive attitudes to the subject, to their teachers and to the school in general make a significant contribution to the very high standards in mathematics.
124. A mixed ability Year 7 group was able, with confidence, to draw conversion graphs to change *mph* into *km* per hour, and pounds into kilograms. The pupils took care over the labelling and drawing of these graphs. The group responded well to the teacher's technique of making the odd 'deliberate mistake' in order to inject challenge into the lesson and maintain concentration. Pupils in a middle attaining Year 9 set successfully plotted graphs involving squares and cubes. They could describe the main features of their graphs and were confident enough to answer, using correct mathematical vocabulary, some quite challenging questions. A higher attaining Year 10 group were guided by their teacher to 'discover' for themselves that factorisation could, in some circumstances, be used to solve quadratic equations. Pupils expressed surprise and evident enjoyment at the simplicity of the method. In Year 12 students investigated and made conjectures about sequences and series using the correct mathematical language. They were also able to generate sequences by constructing their own spreadsheets. In the sixth form, students make good progress in developing new skills. They learn to use differential and integral calculus effectively to model many aspects of applied mathematics.
125. The quality of teaching in mathematics is very good. Teaching is always at least good and it was very good or excellent in over eight out of ten lessons. The main reasons for this are the enthusiasm and knowledge of teachers for the subject together with the quality of relationships in the classroom. Teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils' and students' strengths and weaknesses, so that work is pitched at the right level of challenge. Questions of the type "Why...?", "How did you...?" or "Is that always true?" feature in most lessons. Pupils feel secure

enough to attempt questions they may not quite know the answer to - they are not afraid to make mistakes. This increases confidence and the pace of learning. In the one instance where a relatively low-key negative comment was made about a pupil's answer by another pupil, the offender was reprimanded in no uncertain terms by the teacher. Pupils are always addressed by name in question and answer sessions, making 'coasting' difficult. This was used effectively in a challenging revision lesson on simple harmonic motion with a Year 13 group. The teacher made a point of not simply giving the answers, but instead forced the group to work them out for themselves. This skilfully led question and answer session resulted in a highly beneficial revision session.

126. The department is run on consultative and democratic lines and led by a very industrious and sensitive head of department. Management of the department is very good. Members of the department have a clear commitment to raising standards and are all hardworking and dedicated teachers. The department is outward looking, and is already actively taking account of changes to the curriculum that the new National Curriculum and its assessment may bring. The department is also involved in a local initiative involving use of the Internet by pupils across the primary/secondary phase, but the use of information technology, including the Internet, could be profitably increased in some lessons.
127. Since the last inspection there have been several areas of improvement. First and foremost, standards reached in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations have improved. In the last report it was stated that some pupils were reverting to the use of calculators too easily and that mental arithmetic was under-emphasised. This is no longer the case. Similarly, the criticism of pupils' lack of confidence in addressing the whole class is no longer valid. Comments were also made about lack of challenge for the more able and the lack of idea sharing within the department. In the case of the former, the increase in the proportion of A*-A grades indicate a significant improvement. The latter is no longer any cause for concern.

NUMERACY

128. Standards of numeracy and mental number skills in mathematics are very good. Some mathematics lessons begin or end with a short mental mathematics test or numeracy activity. Within Key Stage 3 pupils are able to calculate mentally problems such as "20% of £15" or "estimate the approximate square root of 150". A whole-school numeracy policy is planned, which will reflect the *National Numeracy Project* now adopted by primary schools.
129. The development of numeracy skills across the school is an area of strength. Pupils are able to apply and extend their mathematical skills in other subjects with a high degree of success. In no subject is progress inhibited by lack of the appropriate numeracy skills. In geography and history a wide range of data handling skills, both extraction and display, is deployed, especially in Key Stages 4 and 5. Scope to use and display pupils' abilities in number, graphical, recording and measuring skills are evident in other subjects including science and physical education. In Year 12, science students show very good estimation and mental arithmetic skills.

SCIENCE

130. The attainment of pupils in science was very high compared with national averages at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. It was below the average for grammar schools in the earlier key stage, but in line at GCSE. Attainment at A level is above the national average. Results for Key Stage 3 tests over the last three years have considerably exceeded those seen nationally, with all pupils gaining level 5 or above each year. In 1999, three-quarters of all pupils attained level 6 or above. This meant that these pupils had improved by two National Curriculum levels since entering the school, which is much better than the one level expected nationally, and indicates that pupils make very good progress in the subject.
131. In GCSE double award science, the proportion of pupils gaining A* - C grades is also significantly above all schools nationally, with an improvement seen each year. In 1999, results in science were slightly below those of the other core subjects in the school. Nevertheless, almost all pupils, 97.2 per cent, gained A* - C grades, more than double the national figure, and a high proportion, over 27 per cent, gained A* or A grades. Results in the

science A level subjects are also very good, with over 90 per cent of students attaining pass grades in all three subjects last year. Physics results have been consistently good, with all students achieving pass grades for the last three years and three-quarters of students attaining the higher grades A* - C in 1999. Biology and chemistry also produced good results.

132. Levels of attainment are very high at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and above average in the senior school. From the work seen throughout the school, all pupils are achieving the levels expected by the end of each key stage, or above. The high quality of teaching and the excellent response of pupils contribute greatly to this achievement. Above average achievement was seen in all years and in all key stages. Year 7 pupils could describe the changes in the arrangement of particles as a gas changes to a liquid and the passage of water through the membrane of a cell. They are adept at performing calculations of percentage water loss in plant tissue or the work done in pulling a wooden block up an inclined plane. Sixth form students in all three sciences demonstrate high levels of understanding of topics such as the relationship between different groups of organic chemicals in terms of their structure, reactions and formulae. Achievement in line with that expected was seen in some mid-attainer groups in Key Stage 3 and lower sets in Key Stage 4. Here lower school pupils could describe balanced forces or identify the features of a fair test. Since the last inspection, the standard of scientific investigation has improved greatly. By the end of the GCSE course, pupils can make detailed predictions of their expected results and base them on scientific knowledge. Pupils are also able to analyse trends in their results in detail, represent them graphically and pick out unusual results as, for example, when looking at the factors that affected the rates of chemical reactions.
133. The high standard of teaching is a strength of the department, with four out of every five lessons seen good or better. Very good teaching made up half of all lessons, with the majority of these in Key Stage 4 and in the senior school. Teachers make their expectations clear and plan the lessons well, explaining where they fit with previous work. The team of technicians aids that planning by providing very effective support for practical sessions. The very best lessons are ones that present pupils with tasks to challenge them intellectually and where teachers use their subject expertise to present information in different ways. This was seen in examination revision lessons for GCSE and A level. When the pace is brisk and teachers give time limits for completion of each activity, pupils sustain high levels of concentration throughout the lesson. The high quality of teaching produced the very best response in pupils; without exception, they behave very well, produce a very high standard of written work and during practical activities all work safely. The few weaknesses seen in lessons were when pupils were given activities that did not sufficiently challenge them to think for themselves, such as copying out instructions or repeating, at length, work covered previously.
134. The department is well managed by the head of department and the issues raised at the last inspection have, in the main, been addressed well. A detailed, one-year departmental development plan, following the school plan, is now devised annually – an improvement since the last inspection. The underdevelopment of information technology as an aid to the teaching of the subject is still an issue. This problem relates to the lack of sufficient software and data logging equipment in the department and is one area for future development. There has been no improvement since the last inspection in the laboratory facilities. The accommodation the department uses is insufficient in quantity, size and quality. However, the very good overall management by teachers and technical staff and the high levels of good behaviour and co-operation from pupils help to compensate for these inadequacies and so standards are not seen to suffer.

ART

135. Standards of attainment are high in art and in the combined art and graphics course. Examination results for both in GCSE in 1999 were significantly above the national averages of all maintained schools for grades A*-C, at 100 per cent and 95 per cent respectively. The department has maintained high standards over the past three years and almost all pupils now attain A*-C grades. At A level, all students have attained pass grades, grades A-E, over the past three years. The number of students attaining A and B grades in the same period was below the national average for all maintained schools, with the exception of 1998, where students gained A and B grades broadly in line with the national average of 45 per cent.
136. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above national expectations. Teacher assessments show that three-quarters of the pupils in 1997 and 1998 and two-thirds in 1999

were working beyond the expected level of attainment, or demonstrating exceptional performance in art. In lessons observed, standards were high in modelling three-dimensional form. Year 7 pupils experiment with clay and papier-mache to make masks based on African techniques of deep-cut carving, showing high levels of application of technical and expressive skills. Pupils communicate ideas and feelings imaginatively and effectively through a well-structured approach to research and investigation. Year 7 pupils use information technology well to find out about other non-western cultures. In Year 9, they research the work of Kandinsky and use the artist's techniques of fluid lines and patterns in their own batik studies. Most pupils' sketchbooks show a systematic approach to drawing and an understanding of colour theory. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special needs make good gains in knowledge of basic skills through the wide use of materials available and through teachers' explanation and demonstration.

137. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is significantly above national expectations. In Years 10 and 11, a well-structured approach to investigating and developing ideas has improved results in the higher grades. Pupils record from direct observation and develop their ideas in a wide range of materials. In Year 10, the majority of pupils know how to apply the skills of batik, dyeing, colour and applique to make a textile piece based on the four seasons. The standard of exploitation of materials and presentation is high for the most able while the majority produce technically sound work. The combined art and graphics group in Year 11, preparing, during the inspection, for a controlled test, are well on course to achieve high standards. Most show well developed analytical investigative skills in two- and three-dimensional studies based on first hand knowledge and study of artists. While sketchbooks are generally well presented, their use as a studio tool is limited. Achievement at all levels of attainment, including that of pupils with special needs, is very good.
138. Standards in the senior school are average. Numbers are increasing and students are on course to achieve higher grades at A level through a well-structured modular approach to coursework in Year 12 which is raising the standard of experimentation overall. Year 13 students show a well-developed understanding of the investigating and making aspects of the course; for example, in textile and sculpture studies higher attaining students analyse and interpret, to a high standard, observations from the natural and made environment. The majority of students plan, investigate and evaluate projects with increasing insight. Most are successfully increasing their knowledge of critical and contextual studies through well-researched personal studies. Achievement overall is very good, and particularly so for the student with English as an additional language.
139. Pupils respond well to the positive climate for learning. Most enjoy art, expect to work hard and concentrate on learning and improving their skills and understanding. Pupils at both key stages and in the senior school are independent, self-reliant and confident, with creative ways of working. Behaviour is excellent. Many share views in class and in one-to-one discussions when prompted by the teacher. However, most are reticent in contributing to whole-class discussion during evaluation sessions and this has an adverse impact on the quality and use of art vocabulary to extend the most able and talented pupils.
140. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. In five out of every six lessons observed, teaching is good or better. In one lesson, teaching was excellent. Overall, teaching is very good in the senior school and good in the rest of the school, characterised by enthusiasm and good subject knowledge. Teachers have very good expertise and plan and prepare thoroughly. They have high expectations for pupils' learning and are skilled in preparing them for examinations, which contributes to well above average results. Most teachers use effective questioning at the beginning of lessons to link with past work and get the lesson off to a good start, though this is inconsistent in a few lessons. Where teaching is excellent, the teacher demonstrates and explains tasks and skills effectively, and engages pupils orally in evaluating their own and others' work using skilful questioning. Examples include helping pupils to improve their compositional skills by using contrasting and harmonising colours and building up the two-dimensional surface by overlaying textures and shapes to achieve space and depth. Where teaching is less inspiring, pupils are not sufficiently engaged in evaluating each other's work to extend their oral vocabulary and there is a lack of challenge in offering pupils a wider range of mark-making materials. This results in lower than expected achievement in their ability to interpret volume, when, for example, they are designing a pot.
141. The art curriculum is broad and well balanced, though information technology has not yet been fully incorporated and developed in the schemes of work. Sound management sets the tone

for the department and an appropriate handbook gives clear guidance to staff. Since the last inspection, schemes of work have been revised to include assessment and differentiated planning at Key Stage 3, with the introduction of controlled tests and related National Curriculum assessment for the programmes of study. The combined art and graphics course will not be offered next year. The department policy has a very good assessment process and makes a significant contribution to the cultural development of pupils, with a strong multi-cultural focus. Art is enriched with visits for older pupils, though there is a lack of art activity days and opportunities to see original paintings and sculptures for younger pupils. Artwork is appropriately displayed in art rooms and corridors.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

142. The school teaches design and technology as the four aspects of the subject - resistant materials, graphics, systems and control, and food. Standards of attainment in the senior school examinations at AS level in design and technology using resistant materials and at A level in home economics are in line with students' abilities, close to the average nationally.
143. Key Stage 3 achievements are good. Pupils have a good technical vocabulary and use knowledge from the programmes of study to inform their decision-making. The rate of progress across the key stage in measuring, marking and cutting skills is very good in relation to the low levels of achievement on entry to Year 7. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 are above the national average across all aspects and in line with pupils' abilities. Standards of attainment in GCSE examinations at Key Stage 4, using resistant materials and food, are very high. When using graphics, the standards are high. In all aspects, the results are significantly above all schools, but they are below the average point score for most other subjects in the school. The Key Stage 4 results show a considerable improvement on the 1997 Key Stage 3 teacher assessments. Standards of achievement in the sixth form are good. Students demonstrate good use of independent learning skills to focus on areas for investigation, identifying where relevant data can be obtained. They can collect and classify information to extend their research, supported by in-depth trials and tests of materials, systems and processes. At Key Stage 4, achievements are very good. In food lessons, pupils know the key words linked to product development and have a good grasp of nutrition and the dietary needs of different groups of the population. Pupils understand the need for consistency and high standards in food production, but the role played by new technology to meet those standards is not evident in their practical work. When using resistant materials pupils talk enthusiastically about their detailed research work, the developments and the practical making of their products. Making skills show clearly how they are refining their ideas to improve the products. Using graphics, they develop detailed criteria for their designs that take into account the appearance, the function and the users of the finished product. When making, they adapt their methods to changing circumstances with a sound rationale.
144. Since the last inspection standards of attainment have improved in all key stages and in almost all aspects, especially food and graphics, where they were sound. However, standards of attainment in food examinations at A level have dropped and there are no candidates in Year 12 this year. Standards of achievement in all key stages have improved across all aspects in resistant materials. Control technology has developed and product analysis has improved and is more realistic. In both key stages and the senior school drawing skills are limited. Annotation styles and drawing techniques are basic and not sufficiently developed to include a broadening range of styles and techniques. The lack of formal drawing techniques was an issue in the last report. Assessment, recording and reporting have improved, but further development, to better inform pupils of their progress, is needed.
145. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good overall, with some very good teaching. Clear planning and direction for teaching and learning set high standards that challenge all abilities. Teachers use a good range of teaching and learning styles. Focused questioning extends pupils' thinking and very good thought provoking techniques give pupils responsibility for some aspects of their learning. In lessons using resistant materials, pupils are taught well how to use their knowledge of movement devices to make mechanical toys. In Year 7 systems and control lesson, resources are selectively introduced and used successfully to develop pupils' understanding of the role of transistors. When using food, the teaching sometimes lacks urgency. Overall, however, the thoroughness ensures that key learning points are understood and the pupils make good progress. At Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is good. In one Year 10 lesson, the teaching was excellent. The combination of activities, 3-dimensional

explorations and the challenge to experiment and use different materials, enabled the pupils to make very good progress in this lesson. Generally, teaching sets high expectations that are clear to pupils and gives very good support for learning. In Years 12 and 13, the quality of teaching is good. The teacher's expertise and knowledge of materials are the key to the development of pupils' high level research skills in the use of resistant materials.

146. Information technology, including computer aided design and making, is used in both key stages and the senior school. However, the quality of machines and appropriate software generally is unsatisfactory to support learning in this area of the curriculum. The food room is outdated and showing signs of wear. It does not create the correct ethos for food technology.

GEOGRAPHY

147. The results of teacher assessments for the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that attainment for these pupils was significantly above national averages in 1999. The proportion of pupils obtaining GCSE A*- C grades in 1999 was well above the national average, although the percentage of pupils achieving A* and A grades was below the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving A* - C grades was slightly below the national average for similar schools. A level results were above the national average.
148. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is well above national expectations. Pupils can understand and explain reasons for economic growth in developed countries and have a good understanding of why some environments are in need of protection. They can analyse and evaluate evidence, draw appropriate conclusions and communicate findings. All pupils have a good knowledge of the technical terms used in geography and are able to use these terms appropriately.
149. Attainment by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is also well above average. They have a good knowledge of location and have developed the skills to carry out a detailed study of a chosen place using information they have collected themselves. All pupils know and understand well how the lives of people are influenced by their surroundings and most pupils recall accurately specific facts relating to the examination syllabus.
150. The attainment of A level students is very high, with all students having acquired well-developed investigative and data handling skills, which they are able to incorporate into extended writing in their individual studies.
151. The quality of teaching is good at both Key Stage 3 and 4 and is very good in the senior school. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers know their subject and, with their enthusiasm for the subject, act as good role models. Lessons are well planned with clear aims, which are very well explained to the pupils. The content is well chosen, with a good variety of purposeful, well-structured activities that are supported by appropriate resources that meet the needs of all pupils. In a Year 8 lesson on economic growth in Japan, good opportunities for independent learning were further enhanced by the use of video material, effective guidance sheets and, most importantly, clear instructions and encouragement from the class teacher. Similarly, in a Year 11 lesson on the impact of earthquakes, pupils were encouraged to analyse written reports following information from the class teacher, very effectively supported by video material. Through well-organised whole-class and group discussion, they significantly extended their knowledge and understanding of the social and physical consequences of earthquakes and were able to present comprehensive strategies for reducing the impact.
152. Teachers usually have high, but realistic, expectations of pupils, both for their standards of work and for their behaviour. In one lesson seen at Key Stage 4, pupils were not sufficiently extended, when opportunities for the most able were not fully developed through the work set and the use of a limited range of activities. In a very good senior school lesson, however, students used information from their recent field-study to develop knowledge and understanding of a range of issues identified during their field study to assist in making decisions regarding the focus for their individual studies. This was very well planned and supported by the teacher. Fieldwork has also helped Key Stage 4 pupils to take more responsibility for their learning and to extend their skills of analysing data to test geographical ideas. Pupils of all ages make good progress in the skills of numeracy, including the interpretation of statistical information and the use and interpretation of graphs. A sense of

wonder is developed through the study of such phenomena as earthquakes and volcanoes and pupils increase their knowledge of other cultures through the study of other people and places.

153. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They are generally keen to answer questions and respond readily to the challenge of work, often co-operating with others to share ideas. They are at their best when given responsibility for their learning and when faced with the challenge of enquiry. Pupils enjoy geography lessons and good numbers choose to take geography at GCSE and A level.
154. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Schemes of work are in place, but lack essential detail and are not as helpful as they could be in supporting and guiding lesson planning. Essential information on assessment, clarification of objectives, specific targets and activities, and outcomes, especially for the most able, would be particularly helpful. The use of ongoing assessment during lessons is good, but marking in exercise books is not significantly assisting progress or being used to set targets for pupils to improve their work.
155. Day-to-day organisation of the subject is good in many respects. Teachers are good role models. They are committed and give generously of their time. Communication within the department is generally effective, especially given the distance between geography teaching rooms. However, management still requires further development and some of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report have still not been addressed. While the skills of analysis and evaluation are now very well developed and a wide range of teaching approaches is now being employed, some of the more able pupils at Key Stage 4 are still underachieving and the use of information technology in lessons is still very limited. The department development plan identifies some priorities, but does not identify in enough detail how these priorities will be met and gives no real indication of how progress will be evaluated. Although the social sciences department, which includes geography staff, meets fairly regularly, the geography department does not meet formally and insufficient time is spent on curriculum review and development. There is some monitoring of teaching and learning, but no formal target setting results and there are only limited opportunities to learn from good practice within the department.

HISTORY

156. Standards seen in history are very good in all key stages throughout the school. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national average. Teacher assessments over the last three years show an improving trend, with a significant number of girls attaining level 7 and, in 1999, level 8 National Curriculum grades, and this is matched by work seen. This remains the same at Key Stage 4, where over the last three years, girls have performed significantly above the national average for all schools at GCSE. Although the trend in A*-C passes is slightly downward over this period (from 100 per cent in 1997 to 98.4 per cent in 1999), the number of girls attaining A* and A grades was consistently good and rose in 1999 to 72 per cent of the cohort. In this year, history was the highest performing GCSE subject in the school. At A level, while standards seen in lessons were very good, there has been a decline in external examination performance over the last three years, from just above to below the national average. In 1997 the number of A-E grade passes was 90.9 per cent, against 86.5 per cent for all schools nationally. In 1998 the figure was 84.8 per cent, again above the national average of 83.6 per cent, while in 1999 it was 57.8 per cent, against the national figure of 87.9. In current Year 12 and 13 lessons, however, attainment is well above average, with all students displaying the ability to think clearly, to build a coherent extended argument in answer to questions set and to express themselves well verbally. The most able students are extremely fluent in both oral and written work and can write comprehensive answers worthy of the highest grades.
157. Pupils' learning is evenly good or very good in Key Stage 3 and is very good in Key Stage 4 and in the senior school. The girls respond well to the mostly very good teaching and, therefore, quickly gain excellent attitudes to learning. They display a keen enthusiasm and enjoyment in all lessons and an extremely high motivation to succeed. They clearly like and respect their teachers and each other, always listening with consideration to all opinions. This is a direct result of their teachers' high expectations, commitment, skill and obvious enthusiasm and regard for their subject and for their pupils.

158. Progress in all key stages is very good. By the end of Key Stage 3, many pupils display a very good ability to think through a problem and to explain consequences of given causes. All can use source materials with confidence and a significant minority can relate their ideas across topics and time periods, thereby reaching a very high level of attainment. Written work is universally well presented and is often of extremely high quality, particularly in response to projects. For example, in Year 7 the girls produce imaginative and well-researched personal work on the Crusades, some of which displays good use of information and communication technology used for research (including use of the Internet and CD-ROM) and for the imaginative presentation of findings.
159. This progress is maintained in Key Stage 4, where pupils consolidate their learning very well and continue to make very good gains in skill and knowledge. In particular, the pupils' recall of facts is extremely good and most are able to use them well to explain answers and to suggest ideas in response to teachers' well-structured questions. Again, some can relate ideas well to other areas of study, both within and outside the history curriculum. Sixth form pupils are particularly good at thorough research and at debating issues in well-structured group activities. They are taught good strategies for approaching examination questions and all students achieve well for their ability. In Key Stages 3 and 4, however, there is evidence that pupils need the reassurance of being 'guided' through the processes and uses of skills described above, being quite reliant on their teacher to supply the next appropriate question to ask in a given situation. Sometimes the higher attainers are not being challenged or extended sufficiently.
160. Standards of literacy and numeracy are generally very good, and sometimes excellent, throughout the school, although some poor spelling and poor use of language was seen from a few pupils in Key Stage 3. The range of ability on intake is wide for a selective school, but in all lessons pupils perform well, because the teaching methods used are very well planned and suited to the needs of the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs.
161. The teaching of history is very good across the school, because of the high expectations of teachers and the depth of their knowledge, which enables them to motivate and challenge pupils. In particular, teachers are very good at using an effective mixture of techniques, including giving information, questioning and challenging. They require pupils to co-operate and work together in pairs or small groups to discuss issues and to 'brainstorm' and agree responses for later discussion with the whole class. Pupils develop some good independent learning habits and skills and progress has been made on this since the last inspection. However, more remains to be done here in fully promoting pupils' self-reliance in all possible contexts. This will require teachers to make the structure of the subject even more explicit, and will involve the more consistent use of challenging aims and objectives at the start of lessons. It will also require them to employ clear descriptions of levels of performance in the development of skills and concepts in order that pupils may contribute more meaningfully to the setting of their own targets.
162. The leadership of the subject within the department is good and this results in effective staff co-operation, good relationships and coherent planning for pupils' work and progress. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in monitoring within the subject. Procedures remain good for monitoring pupils' progress, but their individual targets now need to be more precise in order that they may know exactly how they may improve. The monitoring of teaching and of the curriculum has improved, but would now benefit from a sharper focus in order to maximise the sharing of the planning and method skills that exist among the staff. Good progress has also been made in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in history. Teachers have undertaken appropriate training in ICT and its use is planned into work schemes. Pupils display good skills and knowledge in methods of finding and presenting information, including the use of the Internet.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

163. At Key Stage 3, all pupils are attaining level 5 or higher in teacher assessments. This is well above the national average. At Key Stage 4, all pupils take a certificate course in information technology (IT), either a GCSE short or full course. The attainment in these GCSE's at A to C grades is well above the national average. In the short course, 66.7 per cent of pupils at Highsted gained A* - C grades, compared with 45.0 per cent nationally. In the full GCSE course, 91.7 per cent gained grades A* - C, compared with 52.8 per cent nationally. For

grades A to G they are above the national average, all pupils at this school gaining a pass, whereas the national percentage is 95.6.

164. At A level in computer studies, 71 per cent of pupils achieved grades A to E. This is below the national average.
165. Overall, attainment is above average at the end of Key Stage 3. Most are attaining level 6 at the end of the key stage. The pupils know, understand and can use the skills of word processing, desktop publishing and data handling very well in all key stages. They can handle information well. By the end of Key Stage 3, they are able to use and apply formulae in computer models and spreadsheets. There is good knowledge of the use of control at the end of Year 9, but work in this aspect of information technology is not continued into Key Stage 4. Again, attainment overall is above average at the end of this stage, even though there some weaknesses. Elements of the programme of study for IT are intended to be taught as cross-curricular themes through Key Stage 4, but coverage is uneven. The pupils' knowledge of data capture is underdeveloped at both Key Stage 3 and 4. Neither control and monitoring nor measurement using information technology are taught to all classes and levels of achievement in these aspects of the subject are, therefore, lower. Other aspects are developed well; pupils make good progress and attain good standards in, for example, the communication of information using information and communication technology (ICT). Project work done by Year 10 and Year 11 pupils shows evidence of much work at level 7 of the National Curriculum.
166. Overall, the behaviour of all pupils is good and often very good. The pupils' attitude to work when presented with demanding challenges is very good and sometimes excellent. All pupils are hardworking and conscientious when presented with challenging tasks, such as when preparing data for processing by a complex database for the first time. When lessons are not challenging then attitudes and behaviour are only satisfactory. Very positive and constructive relationships were observed between pupils and between staff and pupils. Pupils show considerable initiative and are always willing to accept responsibility. They can be trusted to work purposefully and very responsibly in ICT rooms unsupervised out of lesson times. Concentration levels are very high, pupils are always enthusiastic and attitudes to work are very positive. Pupils were enthusiastic when interrogating data about accidents for a report into sectors of the community vulnerable to accidents. Pupils are well motivated by the use of ICT in their lessons, with evidence of ICT being used well for homework in other subject areas.
167. Teaching is good overall. It is very good in Key Stage 3, very good in two-thirds of lessons in this key stage, and consistently good elsewhere. The lessons are always well planned with the teachers showing a very good knowledge of the subject. The use of worksheets, however, sometimes leads to insufficient opportunities for challenging tasks being set for the more able pupils. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is very good and their expectations are high. The management of pupils is consistently of a high order, but the use of assessment and the teaching methods used are generally satisfactory rather than good.
168. In all lessons observed, good support was given to pupils when needed, including pupils with special educational needs, and good progress was made by pupils in almost all lessons.
169. All pupils have an e-mail account at school and are able to access this and the Internet during lessons in the IT suite or out of lesson time at lunchtime and after school. These sessions are manned and monitored by the IT staff. The history department has used this access very effectively to raise standards in project work on World War 2. The teaching of IT skills in communicating and handling information continues to be very good. These skills have been used well to support learning in other subject areas, such as mathematics and history.
170. The management of the subject is good overall and is providing clear educational direction for the future development of the subject within the school. The use of information technology has developed considerably since the last inspection, but so have the demands and expectations placed upon the subject. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement, but there are still significant areas of weakness. Cross-curricular resourcing and use of IT was a concern in the last report and this continues to be so. There is a cross-curricular group for IT addressing the issues. There is insufficient use of information technology for modelling, measurement and control in both Key Stage 3 and 4. Although some data capture was seen in a GCSE science lesson and a control project for Year 9 in design and technology, there is insufficient evidence that planning is in place to cover this aspect of IT fully and meet statutory requirements. Some subjects do not plan IT extensively enough into their schemes of work because of a perceived lack of guaranteed access to the technology or lack of experience to use the facilities. This

particularly affects the use and development of IT skills in art and music. There are also some weaknesses in the assessment of IT across the curriculum. Assessment of IT against National Curriculum criteria is not used to clearly identify learning gains or to provide guidance to pupils for improvement.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

171. The department has maintained the strengths of the last inspection and has made good progress since then as a result of the exceptionally hard work of all staff. The quality of teaching has improved, particularly in respect of the quality of activities, which was an area identified for improvement in the last report. Teachers ensure that they plan for an interesting range of activities, which motivates pupils and is a factor in their high attainment. There is an increased demand for pupils to speak without prompts and the department has invested in texts, which support the development of reading skills, although a wider range is still needed. Information and communication technology is used well by many staff when, for example, they encourage pupils to download information from the Internet and to present work using computer technology. In some rooms, website addresses are on display for the pupils' information. However, the use of information and communication technology is inconsistent across the department.
172. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 was very high in both French and German. In French, 98.4 per cent of pupils gained A* to C grades and in German 100 per cent gained A* to C grades. In comparison with other grammar schools, performance was slightly below average as fewer pupils gained A* grades in both French and German.
173. The small number of pupils taking French and German in the senior school in 1999 makes comparisons with national data invalid. All pupils attained grades A to E. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, attainment was well above average in both French and German.
174. The inspection found that attainment is similar to that of 1999 and that performance is well above average at Key Stage 3 and very high at Key Stage 4. Again, numbers in the sixth form are small but attainment in the sixth form is broadly in line with national averages. Pupils make very good progress at all key stages including lower attaining pupils who receive very good support from their teachers. Higher attaining pupils make good progress as teachers ensure that they are challenged by activities or by questions that encourage them to extend and deepen their responses.
175. At the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils understand French and German when spoken at normal speed by their teachers but many are less confident when listening to tapes and need repetition. By the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils have made very good progress and can follow a foreign language spoken at normal speed by strangers. Pupils in Year 1, listening to a recording of young people discussing their favourite films in German, did not need the tape to be repeated and most were highly successful in the activity that followed. Many pupils in the senior school are capable of responding to extensive discussion about, for example, the influence of media. A few are less confident and need the support of repetition.
176. At all key stages, many pupils have good accents. This is because of the very good use of the foreign language by all staff and their high expectations, seen in the way in which teachers use ongoing assessment to correct pronunciation and intonation. By the end of Key Stage 3, many pupils sustain a dialogue of four to five sentences, higher attaining pupils sustaining more. Lower attaining pupils still need the support of repetition. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils have developed a wide vocabulary and are capable of extended responses. Their French and German are mainly accurate, although average and lower attaining pupils have some difficulty with grammar. In the senior school, a few pupils express a point of view cogently and are capable of analysing ideas. However, a significant number in the sixth form lack the confidence to give an opinion, although they can when pressed. Members of staff encourage pupils to use the target language in class and in the sixth form most pupils have the confidence to use it all the time. At Key Stages 3 and 4, many pupils are diffident about using a foreign language except when responding directly to questions. However, a few have the courage, as was observed in a German lesson when a pupil continued to discuss the task in German, oblivious to the fact that her friends continued to talk in English.

177. Reading skills are well developed, although in the sixth form many pupils find difficulty in using skills of inference and deduction when analysing texts. At Key Stage 3, most pupils read their own writing fluently and can understand brief texts from a range of genres. At the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils cope with unseen texts, reading them with reasonable fluency and understanding. Pupils faced with a text they had not met before, which required them to complete a survey, were able to read and understand it. A few do not use the context to help them to understand it. Pupils at all key stages use dictionaries proficiently, as teachers expect them to be independent and to find out the meanings of words for themselves.
178. Most pupils take pride in the presentation of their work, a response to the high expectations of the staff. Pupils writing about food in Year 9 wrote reasonably accurately and at length. Others gave good descriptions about their families. At the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils use the structures of language well to write pieces that interest the reader. Most pupils can give a point of view, but a significant number are inaccurate in their grammar or spelling. In the sixth form, the senior school, the writing of higher attaining pupils has depth and pupils justify their arguments well. The writing of many pupils in the senior school lacks detail and analysis and has inaccuracies of grammar and spelling.
179. The behaviour and attitudes of the vast majority of pupils are very good and are a major factor in the high attainment in the subject, as pupils are enabled to listen and learn. This is because teachers use highly effective methods to manage pupils. A pupil who had forgotten a book in the sixth form was left in no doubt about the misdemeanour. In a Year 8 class, a pupil who momentarily lost interest was quickly brought back by being asked a question. She politely apologised for her lapse in concentration. Relationships in all the classes are very good, which supports the pupils' learning, because they feel confident to have a go and are not afraid to make mistakes. Almost all pupils are highly motivated and work hard. A key strength in the department is the mutual respect shown to all by all. Pupils respect each other's point of view and listen carefully to their teachers. When working in pairs or groups, collaboration is excellent, all pupils work hard on the task and share ideas well. Despite the best endeavours of all staff, a few pupils in the senior school can be passive, contributing relatively little to lessons, which is adversely affecting their attainment in speaking.
180. The quality of teaching is very good and often excellent at all key stages. In addition to the qualities above, all staff use the target language exceptionally well which supports pupils' learning of key phrases and helps to develop their listening skills. Teachers have authentic accents and as a result, the accents of many pupils are good. All teachers have high expectations of their pupils and this is a key factor in the high attainment. Teachers also use questions very effectively to extend the learning of pupils. This was observed in all classrooms. One example was in a senior school form lesson, when pupils discussed the depiction of Provence by artists. In this lesson, the teacher made excellent use of questions to encourage pupils to reflect upon and analyse the paintings. Learning here was excellent and all pupils were enabled to extend their vocabulary and to develop the skills needed to gain good grades at A level. In another senior school lesson, in which pupils discussed gender issues, the teacher's high expectations and effective use of questions persuaded a quiet group to respond and make good progress.
181. Very good use is made of time in lessons and lessons are well planned, which maintains pupils' motivation. Resources are used most effectively, although the quality of worksheets that have been photocopied is sometimes poor and lacks appeal. Pupils in Year 7 were enthusiastic to take part in activity that involved hiding a spider and describing where it was hidden. Pupils in Year 9, in their first year of studying German, were enthused by a game in which they had to draw an object. These two activities extended and consolidated speaking and listening skills most effectively. The motivation that is engendered by the staff leads to pupils enjoying learning languages.
182. All staff use homework very effectively to extend and consolidate learning. It is often used at the beginning of a lesson to reinforce the learning from a previous lesson.
183. All teachers ensure that work is matched to the attainment of the pupils by extending questions for higher attaining pupils and using much repetition and offering individual support to lower attaining ones. In a Year 8 German class, the teacher gave a prompt sheet for an activity that had the vocabulary that pupils needed printed at the bottom. She asked the pupils to fold over the sheet so that the higher attaining pupils were encouraged to answer without the prompts, but the lower attaining ones had them if they needed support. Within the present structure of

the teaching groups, teachers could not do more than they are doing to ensure that the highest attaining pupils reach high standards.

184. The department is very well led and there is a high degree of consistency within the department in the implementation of policies and the quality of teaching. This is a contributory factor in the high standards achieved by the pupils.

MUSIC

185. Teacher assessment of standards in music at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicates that all pupils attained national expectation or above, with 57.94% attaining beyond expectation and 19.63% demonstrating exceptional performance. These statistics are significantly above the national average. Work seen during the inspection indicates that, at the end of the key stage, the majority of pupils are working above the expected levels for their age. The majority of pupils are able to play instrumental melodies accurately. The more musically able pupils play sophisticated parts very competently. A small minority of pupils lacks secure technical control when playing keyboards. The quality of class singing is good and pupils hold a second part securely, as heard in the singing of 'Castle on a Cloud'. Pupils' compositions show insight into different musical styles and structures. For example, when writing variations on Frère Jacques, pupils are able to combine simple instrumental parts to produce effective short pieces. Some interesting development of ideas takes place, though some pupils have only a small range of basic strategies for varying the melody. Pupils use technical vocabulary correctly. They have a good knowledge of music from different times and places and are able to make constructive evaluative comments on each other's work.
186. GCSE and A level results in recent years have been well above national averages. Almost all students have gained grade B or better. In lessons, students' responses within class discussions indicate good levels of knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of the musical extracts being studied for their respective courses.
187. Pupils receiving specialist instrumental tuition attain good standards for the lengths of time they have been learning. Many instrumentalists pass Associated Board examinations each year, with a good number reaching the higher grades (Grade III or above). Pupils learning to play through the 'Baby Strings' initiative also achieve good standards for their short period of study, and learn effectively within the group, which numbers over thirty pupils. They have good basic performing skills and play well together as an ensemble. Musical standards in extra-curricular activities are good. The tonal quality of pupils' singing, as heard in school's staged production and in the chamber choir, is good. Part-singing is secure. Pupils sing enthusiastically and very competently, though they do not always convey the spirit of the music sufficiently to listeners.
188. The quality of teaching is good overall at Key Stage 3, ranging from very good to satisfactory. Where teaching is very good, lessons are well paced, questioning strategies are well used to consolidate pupils' learning, and pupils are encouraged to assess their work. As a result, very good learning takes place, with pupils showing significant improvements, for example, in their skills and understanding of melody writing. Where teaching is satisfactory, instrumental parts of varying degrees of difficulty are provided to take account of pupils' different levels of performing expertise, but higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently to tackle the most difficult part of which they are capable. In some lessons, pupils are playing as a class and only small amounts of time are given for pupils to work independently. However, the quality of learning in these lessons is satisfactory overall. Clear improvement is evident in the standards of pupils' playing, but the more musically able pupils are not progressing at a rate comparable with their levels of musical expertise. The pupils' attitudes in music lessons are good, and, where teachers' expectations are high, they are excellent.
189. At Key Stage 4, teaching for the GCSE course is good overall, with some very good characteristics. The resulting quality of pupils' learning is good. Lessons include detailed analyses of musical extracts, though at times questioning strategies are not always used sufficiently to involve students in discussion and to check and consolidate their levels of knowledge and understanding. The quality of teaching for the A level course is very good. Lessons are very well paced, and teacher expectation of student involvement is high. As a result, very good learning takes place with significant gains in levels of insight into musical style and structure within lessons. Students' attitude to their studies at both GCSE and A level

is very good. The quality of teaching and learning in instrumental lessons is very good. At best, sophisticated points of detail raised by the teacher are successfully implemented by the pupils, resulting in excellent learning. There is no unsatisfactory teaching at any key stage.

190. Insufficient progress has been made in developing the Key Stage 3 scheme of work since the last inspection. The revised scheme contains a detailed description of the course that clearly indicates that statutory requirements are met. However, the scheme still lacks detail of objectives, assessment arrangements, and the relationship of planning to address National Curriculum Attainment Targets and programmes of study. Schemes of work for the GCSE and A level examinations provide the necessary information for delivering the courses effectively. The department offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities that attract very good levels of pupil involvement. Formal concerts provide good opportunities for pupils to perform before large audiences.
191. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, but good for examination classes, where they support the learning of the small groups of students appropriately. Useful comments noted over time are kept on Key Stage 3 pupils' performing skills. Other Key Stage 3 marks are not adequately criterion-referenced, and therefore do not directly support judgements made in relation to end of key stage descriptions.
192. The day-to-day management of the department is good. Accommodation is satisfactory. Pupils use available accommodation well, though the practice rooms are barely satisfactory, because they are not in the immediate vicinity of the main teaching room and are not weatherproof. Resources are satisfactory. The department has a good range of electronic keyboards and tuned percussion instruments that are used well in lessons. There is insufficient computer software to support pupils' work in composition.
193. Overall, music makes a significant contribution to the life and culture at the school. A good range of music from around the world is studied, including examples from China, India and the West Indies. The opportunities for pupils to take part in major school productions and concerts raise the profile of the subject within the school and make a significant contribution to their cultural and social development. There are moments of spirituality in music lessons, especially in those in which church music is studied or sung.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

194. Since the previous inspection, examination results in physical education have improved considerably. In 1999, the GCSE examination was taken for the first time by Year 11 pupils (previously the subject was a sixth form option only) and 82 per cent achieved A*-C grades, which is well above the national average. 27 per cent gained grade A passes, which is well above the national proportion. These results are very creditable for the first Key Stage 4 group taking the examination course and represent high achievement for the pupils concerned. In the senior school, the A level sports studies course is increasing in popularity and results are improving. In 1999, all candidates were successful. Although, at 12.5 per cent, the proportion of A grades was below the national average, this also represents high achievement for the students concerned.
195. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average, and pupils' achievement is good. A high proportion of pupils are achieving expected standards in their activities, including the small number having special educational needs. Standards in games and gymnastics are above average at this key stage. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is well above average overall. In the core physical education programme, attainment is above average, whilst those girls who have chosen to take GCSE physical education are reaching standards in practical work that are well above average. The standard of GCSE theory work is very high, as a result of the very good teaching and high expectations of teachers and the pupils' own strong commitment to their studies. This continues into the senior school, where attainment in A level sport studies is also well above average.
196. Learning, and the rate of pupils' progress in physical education, are good in Key Stage 3 for all, including those with special educational needs. In Key Stage 4, achievement and progress is very good, especially for pupils taking the GCSE course. This continues to be the case in the senior school, and reflects the high levels of maturity and motivation of the increasing numbers of pupils following examination courses at each stage.

197. Pupils are extremely co-operative and their behaviour is exemplary. Their attitudes towards physical education are very positive at all key stages and their levels of interest and enthusiasm are frequently very high. Participation rates are very good and girls have well-developed learning skills. They show strong commitment and work hard in their activities, listening well to advice from teachers and applying it effectively to improve their skills. Collaborative work is very good and, in examination work, there is a very strong work ethic and many show a very mature approach to their studies.
198. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, and is now good overall. At Key Stage 3, teaching is good. Subject knowledge and understanding are very strong. Lessons are well structured, with good opportunities to engage pupils in the planning and evaluation of their work in gymnastics. There is need to provide more opportunities for pupils' evaluation in games activities. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is also good. In examination work in Key Stage 4 and in the senior school, teaching is very good because expectations are very high, and the clear emphasis of high standards triggers a very positive response from pupils. The most successful teaching combines very strong subject knowledge, linking theory and practical work well, with excellent pupil management skills. It is characterised by high expectations and well-timed intervention and feedback to promote learning. Where this was the case in, for example, Year 7 gymnastics, Year 12 A level work on breathing systems, and Year 13 A level theory work on fitness training principles, pupils were fully engaged by the work presented, took responsibility for their own learning and made very good progress. Across the department, relationships and discipline are a major strength. Good use is made of homework in examination classes to reinforce and extend learning. Good marking provides positive guidance for improvement. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and few weaknesses were noted. A sharper, planned focus on supporting pupils' literacy, numeracy and information technology skills would add further strength to the current good teaching in physical education.
199. Subject leadership and management have improved since the previous inspection and are now very good. Subject area documentation is developing well. The curriculum is now well balanced at Key Stages 3 and 4 and fully meets National Curriculum requirements. However, the time allocation in Key Stage 3 remains low, and the concerns about this raised in the previous report have not yet been tackled. Further work is needed on the newly revised assessment procedures to ensure that pupils' progress in physical education is effectively tracked throughout the school. In addition, more formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning will ensure consistency in these areas.
200. Despite the improved hard play provision, accommodation for physical education is less than satisfactory. The limitations of the multi-use gymnasium and the shared sports hall arrangements are managed effectively and are well supplemented by some use of the local leisure centre. However, the school's changing accommodation is too small, and storage facilities are restricted. The dedicated classroom base is a positive feature that strengthens subject identity, and provides potential for storing class materials and pupils' records. Resources are generally adequate. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities that enhance the curriculum. These are popular and well supported, and enable some pupils to attain very high standards both as individuals and team members.
201. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. In addition to improving examination results and teaching, leadership and management have improved considerably, and the department has sustained its commitment to both curricular and extra-curricular provision. Curricular weaknesses identified in the previous report have been tackled, although issues relating to accommodation and time for the subject at Key Stage 3 remain causes for concern.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

202. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above national expectations. By the end of the key stage, the pupils have developed a very good understanding of some of the practices and beliefs of the major faiths. They research these faiths and recognise that people of different beliefs have similar needs and shared concerns that may be met in different ways. They consider the links between culture and belief and use practical examples to demonstrate understanding, such as the use of halal and kosher food. Pupils are provided with opportunities to consider ultimate questions, such as the purpose of life and suffering, and to

reflect upon arguments relating to the existence of God, and alternative ideas of creation. Pupils are encouraged to develop their own responses to such questions and to recognise that different viewpoints are valid and may change over time.

203. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is very good. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades for the full course GCSE is well above the national average for all schools, and above the national average for selective schools. The numbers of pupils following the course fluctuate annually. However, over the last three years they have been consistently well above national averages. The GCSE pupils have detailed knowledge and understanding of the main characteristics and practices of the Jewish and Christian religions. They are able to apply this knowledge well to develop a very good understanding of the values and actions of believers and to link this knowledge to religious text. Their use of specialist vocabulary is very good. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 who are following the core religious education course is well above average. All pupils follow the syllabus for the short course GCSE, and the majority are being entered for the examination, which is being taken for the first time this summer. The pupils demonstrate an understanding of Judaism and recognise the role played by religion in the lives of believers. They are keen to discuss contemporary issues and have the opportunity to consider their own values in the light of religious teaching. They apply religious principles to questions of morality, for example to the question of euthanasia, and recognise that religious belief has a direct influence on the values of individuals. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by the use of group and paired work, and make good progress.
204. The quality of teaching is good overall and in many lessons it is very good. There is very good teaching in Key Stage 3 and the senior school and good teaching in Key Stage 4. Lessons are well planned and teachers make efforts to involve pupils in their learning. Teaching strategies are varied to encourage participation and interest. Expectations are high at Key Stage 3 and in the full GCSE course and specialist vocabulary is developed and used well. Teachers have a very good rapport with their pupils, promoting a sense of partnership and confidence. Teachers treat pupils' opinions with respect and, as a result, the pupils are open and willing to treat the opinions of others with equal respect. A secure understanding of their subject enables teachers to respond to pupils' questions and to follow unexpected lines of enquiry. Very good use is made of extended assignments to develop independent learning, and of pupil self-evaluation, to encourage pupils to take responsibility for their achievements and progress. Where teaching is less effective there is a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils and insufficient time for consolidation or feedback of group or paired discussion.
205. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils in religious education classes are very good. They demonstrate interest and commitment to their studies, especially at Key Stage 3, and are mutually supportive in small group or paired work. Concentration levels are high. Pupils taking the full course are enthusiastic and hardworking, taking pride in their work. Pupils following the core religious education course in Year 11 are slightly less motivated, but teachers work hard to capture their interest. There is less intellectual effort from these pupils, although their behaviour remains very good.
206. The management of the subject area is good. The subject area shares the school's commitment to high academic achievement, whilst maintaining its concern for the spiritual development of the pupils. It seeks to create an environment where the beliefs and values of others can be considered with respect and interest. There are good schemes of work for Key Stage 3. Schemes of work for Key Stage 4 are yet to be developed, however. Resources are used very effectively and the teaching environment is stimulating and attractive. The time restraints placed upon the core religious education course at Key Stage 4 reduce the effectiveness of the course. Insufficient opportunities are available to monitor the progress of individual pupils. Assessment and reporting does not yet link in with the attainment targets for the Kent Agreed Syllabus. Religious education provision for Year 12 did not take place during the inspection, but five lessons per year are unlikely to be sufficient to deliver the Agreed Syllabus requirements. There is no provision for religious education in Year 13 and so the school is not meeting statutory requirements for the teaching of the subject at sixth form (senior school) level. The department is investigating the introduction of the AS level in the senior school. An A level course is offered through the partnership with Borden School.
207. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment have been maintained and there has been satisfactory improvement. Pupils have the opportunity to gain national accreditation for the core religious education course through the short course GCSE. The time allocation has

remained very limited at Key Stage 4 and in the senior school. Nevertheless, the study of religious education makes a significant contribution to the spiritual development of pupils. Speakers provide good insights into a spiritual way of life, such as the woman priest who talked of her calling to the priesthood. The cultural development of pupils is enhanced significantly by visits to places of worship sacred to a wide range of faiths, such as synagogues and Roman Catholic churches, that help the pupils to understand and appreciate the many different cultures that make up our ethnically rich society.

Additional subjects offered in the senior school (Sixth Form)

CLASSICS, INCLUDING LATIN

208. Advanced level courses in both Classical Civilisation and Latin are offered in the senior school. The Classical Civilisation course, in 1999, resulted in the school achieving 93.5% A – E pass rate, in line with the national average for the subject. Students study chosen aspects of ancient Greece and Rome and find much relevance in them to philosophical and social aspects of life today, thus widening their personal development and whetting their intellectual curiosity. This was clearly seen in a Year 12 lesson featuring the role of women in Athens.
209. Students' enthusiasm for the subject is very high. They arrive at classes eagerly, settling to work with genuine pleasure and interest. It is very clear, from the amount and the quality of preparation they do for their coursework and presentations in class, that they are not only eager to succeed in the subject, but also enjoy it and take the most they can from it. They are very interested in the literary, dramatic, artistic and architectural areas thrown up by the main body of work and talk with immense interest and pleasure of a trip to Greece, which helped bring all these things to life for them. Relationships with their teacher are very good and the atmosphere of the classes more closely resembles an intense, but relaxed, university seminar than a classroom, so great is the concentration and level of interest shown.
210. Lessons seen taught by the specialist teacher, who also teaches the Latin course, were excellent. He has total command of the subject and uses this expertise extremely well to catch and hold the interest of the students. The most impressive feature of the lessons is their pace; no moment is wasted and students remain fully focused, through the teacher's use of a variety of techniques and methods that ensure that one activity is never pursued for too long. His expectations are very high and his students do not disappoint him. One of the major strengths of the teaching is his ability to make students come to their own conclusions and to think for themselves, researching carefully to be sure of their hypotheses. Work is assessed and marked thoroughly and with copious amounts of help, advice and encouragement. The result of this excellent teaching is that students learn quickly, readily and in a mature manner, so that their studies add greatly to their own development.
211. The A level Latin course, too, shows the results of excellent teaching. The greatest testimony to its effectiveness is the rate of progress. This year's Year 13 students will be the first to take the examination. They began the course eighteen months ago, with no knowledge of the language whatsoever. Now, they are capable, as observed, of translating Pliny's description of a volcano with some facility and, in the inspection team's judgement, all are likely to achieve A or B grades in the examination. This is a tribute both to the teaching and their own interest and dedicated industry. These students have realised how much understanding they have gained of their own language and the philosophies of western life and literature from their study of Latin.
212. Both these subjects show the level of ability of students at the school and their willingness to find pleasure in learning, thus supporting the ethos of the school well. Their existence is a strength in the school's curriculum.

BUSINESS STUDIES

213. The school has offered business studies as a senior school modular A level course since 1998. In the first year, students were entered for two modules, with a further module early in the second year. Results show average attainment for the completed half of the course, with students achieving grades in the B to E range, though most are on course to achieve A-D

grades at A level by the end of Year 13. Scrutiny of Years 12 and 13 folders and discussion with students during the inspection indicate that attainment is average. Students in Year 12 show an understanding of a market-led company and evaluate from a promotional point of view the importance of packaging. They use the Internet to access the annual report and accounts of a share company. In Year 13, students use analytical language through a well-developed approach to essay writing. Students are keen and attentive to learn and all work hard, concentrating well in well-focused individual and group work investigations. No teaching was seen during the inspection. However, there was considerable evidence from discussion with pupils of appropriate materials being used to support students' learning and of the teachers' expertise in preparing students well for examinations, both of which contribute well to their very good progress.

ARCHAEOLOGY

214. The attainment of students in archaeology is satisfactory. The first students sat the A level examination in 1999. However, the low number of students entered makes national comparisons invalid. In work seen, students demonstrate a secure understanding of the methodology of archaeological investigation and can use their findings to propose hypothesis. They gain an understanding of the principles of archaeology and seek to apply these principles to a study of the archaeology of the British Isles from the early Palaeolithic period to post-Roman and recent times.
215. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and students are encouraged to become involved in first hand fieldwork, in addition to their coursework investigations. There is good use of essay preparation and drafting, to focus attention on the key issue of the question. Extended assignments are well used to encourage independent learning.
216. The attitudes of the students are good. Written work displays thought and care, and students approach their studies with interest. The department is developing valuable links with local archaeological societies and students work with the Canterbury Archaeological Trust and the Faversham Archaeological Field Study Centre.

SOCIOLOGY AND GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

217. A level courses in **sociology** and **government and politics** are also offered in the senior school. Recent results in these examinations have been close to the national average and work observed in classes shows that students currently on the courses are attaining well. The teaching is of high quality, never less than very good in the lessons observed, and is resulting in students who are motivated, industrious and keen to undertake individual research. A particular strength of the teaching is the excellent subject knowledge of the teacher, which gives him the knowledge and confidence to extend the students through challenging questioning. The teacher successfully stimulates and interests the students because of his own enthusiasm for the subjects and the depth of his knowledge and expertise. Relationships are excellent, resulting in a very good learning atmosphere in all lessons. The students respond well to the very good learning opportunities they are offered.