

INSPECTION REPORT

THE WESTLANDS SCHOOL

Sittingbourne

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118906

Headteacher: Mr A. Burchett

Reporting inspector: David M Bain
3258

Dates of inspection: 12-16 November 2001

Inspection number: 189393

Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern (non-selective)

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Westlands Avenue
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Kent

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R McCarten

Date of previous inspection: September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3258	David M Bain	<i>Registered inspector</i>		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19720	Deborah Granville-Hastings	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. Links with the community. Pupils' social and cultural development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
17530	Mary Cureton	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Literacy.	
8744	Russell Whiteley	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
14596	Tony Fiddian-Green	<i>Team inspector</i>	Special educational needs.	The school's units for special educational needs.
20767	Jerry Royle	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
19528	Roland Portsmouth	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Numeracy.	
1085	John Laver	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	Assessment.
20247	Roger Parry	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; Post 16; Leisure and tourism.	
22042	John Challands	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	Personal, social and health education.
1990	Graham Preston	<i>Team inspector</i>	Post 16 health and social care.	Sixth Form.
22341	Tristram Shepard	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
1723	Michael Milton	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology.	Learning resources.
20729	James Berry	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	Accommodation.
1240	John King	<i>Team inspector</i>	Post 16 Art.	

4451	Roger Howarth	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education.	Pupils' spiritual and moral development.
18446	Joss Bennathan	<i>Team inspector</i>	Drama.	
15576	David Nebesnuick	<i>Team inspector</i>	Business education	School's use of resources.
15075	Bryan Stephens	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	Work-related curriculum.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Westlands School is a much larger than average, mixed secondary modern school situated on the western edge of Sittingbourne. There are currently 1504 pupils in roll, including 127 in the Sixth Form. Over the last few years, the school has become very popular and is now heavily oversubscribed. It takes pupils from a fairly wide catchment area, including surrounding villages. Whilst the immediate area is advantaged, the school takes substantial numbers of pupils from the most deprived areas locally. Between 25 to 30 per cent of children in the area attend local grammar schools. Thus, the attainment of pupils on intake into the school is well below average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is well above average, as is the proportion with statements. The latter includes 38 in the Dyslexia Provision and seven attached to the Physically Disabled Provision. Those on the register also include significant numbers with some learning and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has an excellent reputation for supporting pupils with special educational needs. It also makes special arrangements for abler pupils and gives priority on entry to those with musical ability. Almost all pupils come from a white UK heritage background, with only a few speaking English as an additional language. The number of pupils leaving or joining the school other than at usual times is below average. About 15 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, broadly average for all schools. Currently, just over a third of pupils continue their education into the school's Sixth Form.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Westlands is a good and improving school with many strengths. Both staff and pupils enjoy working in the school. It has a very good reputation in the local area and parents are very positive about the school. There is strong leadership, correctly focused on improving teaching and learning in order to raise standards, whilst providing good care for pupils. There is much good teaching and, whilst standards of attainment are well below average compared to all schools nationally, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Support from the school's Dyslexia and Physically Disabled Provisions is very good and strongly promotes inclusion. Strategies for quality assurance and the induction of new staff are very good. Very good use is made of resources. The school gives satisfactory value for money and Sixth Form provision is cost effective.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Enables pupils to attain high standards at GCSE in art and design, especially textiles, drama and in performance in music.
- Provides much good quality teaching and some very good, especially in art and design, English, drama, rural science, modern foreign languages and the GNVQ course in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Provides good leadership and management, with a clear educational direction and a very good system of quality assurance.
- Makes very good strategic use of its resources, especially in planning for developments to the buildings.
- Provides good care for pupils, including very good support for their personal, social and moral development, which results in very good relationships, positive attitudes and good behaviour.
- Makes very good provision for pupils with dyslexia and those with physical disabilities, including excellent facilities for those with physical disabilities ensuring they can be fully integrated into the school.
- Provides very effective links with parents and good links with the local community, including businesses, which support very good work-related education.
- Makes very good extra curricular provision, including an excellent school farm.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Standards, to bring them consistently in line with the national average for secondary modern schools or better.
- Teaching strategies to encourage both active and independent learning, which is matched to pupils' individual needs.
- The school's curriculum and its organisation, particularly with reference to grouping arrangements, timing of the school day and the number of subjects taken by pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The school's provision for pupils' cultural development, particularly with reference to other cultures.
- The monitoring and support of pupils' academic performance by tutors and heads of year and the use of assessment consistently by all teachers.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in 1996 and good progress in the Sixth Form. Satisfactory progress has been made in raising levels of attainment, in developing a whole school curriculum policy and a broad and balanced curriculum for Years 10 and 11. However, some weaknesses remain in curricular organisation and not all pupils study design and technology. Good progress has been made in reviewing roles and responsibilities of the senior management team. There has been satisfactory progress in provision for spiritual development, but unsatisfactory progress in improving the multi-cultural dimension of cultural development. There has been unsatisfactory progress in meeting some statutory requirements, although religious education in the Sixth Form is now satisfactory and collective worship has improved. Improvements in provision for pupils with special educational needs are good.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and Sixth Form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A Level/AS-Level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	D
A Levels/AS-Levels	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

(The similar school comparison is with other secondary modern schools nationally, with a similar proportion of free school meals).

Attainment is well below average on entry and overall, in most years, remains so in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE in Year 11. However, in National Curriculum tests in 2001, results in English were broadly average compared to all schools and well above average compared to secondary modern schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Compared to similar secondary modern schools nationally, results in mathematics were well below average, whilst those in science were below average. However, the proportion obtaining Level 6 or better was broadly average for similar schools in mathematics. Achievement is satisfactory by age 14 and good in English.

Results at GCSE are varied. The proportions achieving one or more and five or more grades A*-G are well above average compared to all schools nationally. Pupils with lower ability, including many with special educational needs, are achieving well. The proportion achieving five or more grades A*-C is well below average compared to all schools and below average compared to similar secondary modern schools nationally. However, when prior attainment is taken into account, achievement is broadly average. Overall, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is, therefore, satisfactory. In 2001, results were above average in art and design and drama. When compared to other secondary modern schools they were also above average in French, history and food technology. Results in English have declined over the last three years and are below average compared to other similar secondary modern schools, as are those in mathematics. Results in science are improving, but are well below average compared to similar secondary modern schools. Targets set by the school at GCSE have been surpassed, but were not challenging. A higher target has been set for 2002, with more challenging targets set for individual departments. Attainment of boys and girls varies significantly between subjects and between year groups.

Work seen during the inspection, generally confirmed external results. Standards observed were highest in art and design. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Pupils achieve best where teaching is good and encourages pupils to collaborate effectively and develop independence. Overall, pupils do not read enough, nor are they expected to write at length in most subjects. Speaking and listening skills are below average. Skills in numeracy are sufficient to access the curriculum. Results in the Sixth Form improved in 2001, particularly in vocational courses. However, overall, standards are below national expectations in most Sixth Form courses.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils have good attitudes to lessons and to their learning. Attitudes in the Sixth Form are very good. Many pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, and for the vast majority very good. Pupils are relaxed at break and lunchtimes. Pupils report very little bullying. Exclusions are used as a last resort, with the pupil support provision used effectively to support those who might be excluded.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships in school are very good. Pupils are valued both as individuals and for their contribution to the daily life of the school and are enabled to develop confidence. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to take on responsibilities.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is close to average for all schools nationally, with little unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 - 9	Years 10 - 11	Years 12 - 13
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory

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.

The quality of teaching varies between subjects, although some very good teaching occurs in almost all subjects. There is a high proportion of very good teaching in art and design, English, modern foreign languages, drama and specialist lessons for those with special educational needs. Teaching is also often good in history, geography, personal social and health education (PSHE), music and business education. The best teaching occurs in Year 7, while the most unsatisfactory teaching is in Year 9. There is a high proportion of good teaching in Year 10, whilst the least very good teaching occurs in the Sixth Form. Overall, the quality of teaching in the Sixth Form is satisfactory, and there is less teaching of very good quality than is found in the main school. Teaching is best where pupils are encouraged to become active learners and to develop independent learning skills. In these lessons a variety of teaching strategies are used. Whilst teaching in English is mostly good, it is more varied in mathematics and science. In both these subjects about half of teaching is good, with most of the rest, but not all, satisfactory. Across all subjects, teachers' subject knowledge is good, as is their planning in most lessons. However, teachers' expectations of pupils vary and are not high enough across the ability range in many subjects. They are best in art and design, business education and drama. Pupils are often lively and most teachers channel their enthusiasms constructively into good learning. Performance is a strength of pupils in music and drama, as is independence in art and design. Teaching of literacy in Years 7 - 9 is done well and that of numeracy is developing. Good use is made of computers in many subjects. A strength of teaching is the relationships that teachers develop with pupils, which has helped develop pupils' confidence in seeking help as necessary. Pupils with special educational needs learn well. Teaching in the Dyslexia and Learning Support Provisions is very good. However, grouping arrangements do not always support the most effective teaching, with larger groups of average and lower ability pupils causing some problems in classroom management in some subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad, but its organisation does not fully support pupils of all abilities achieving their best. Extra-curricular provision is very good. Links with the community are good. Not all statutory requirements are met in Years 10 and 11 in design and technology.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are supported well in class. Provision for pupils in the Dyslexia and Learning Support Provisions is very good. Physically disabled pupils are fully integrated and supported very well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are a small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Those at an early stage of English acquisition are supported well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils experience a good programme of personal, social and health education, including very good provision for careers and work experience. Provision for social development is very good and for moral development is good. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Cultural development is strong in the arts, but pupils experience too few opportunities to develop understanding of multi-cultural Britain.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Teachers know pupils well and support for their personal development is very good. Child protection procedures are complied with fully. Procedures for monitoring attendance and behaviour are good. The use of assessment and monitoring and support of academic progress are sound and improving.

The school's partnership with parents is very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The head provides very good leadership and a clear vision. He is supported by an able senior management team and good middle managers. There is a very good school improvement plan.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is well informed and provides very strong support. It has an effective committee structure and understands the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, it has not fulfilled all its statutory duties as regards the curriculum.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school has an impressive system of quality assurance to monitor its performance. The tracking of pupils' progress is good and has been enhanced by the appointment of key stage managers. The strategy for performance management is good.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Educational priorities are very well supported through the school's financial planning, with careful application of the principles of best value. Resources have been used very effectively to plan for developments to the site. Induction of new staff is very good. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum, particularly within special needs provision. Learning resources and accommodation are adequate.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are expected to work hard and make good progress. • Children enjoy coming to school and are helped to become mature and responsible. • The school is well led and managed. • The range of activities outside lessons is very good. • Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. • Parents feel comfortable in approaching the school with any concerns. • Teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • Information on how their children are getting on. • The way the school works with parents. • Behaviour in some classes.

The inspection team agrees with the very positive perceptions of most parents. Inspectors found an appropriate amount of homework was set, not too much as indicated by some parents. Inspectors found behaviour to be good, but recognised that grouping arrangements sometimes led to some more challenging classes, which were not always handled effectively. The school provides much quality information for parents, but the quality of pupils' reports are more varied with too few indicating what pupils need to do to improve their attainment. The inspection team found the school's work with parents to be very good, but recognises that not all parents relate easily to schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The Sixth Form roll has fluctuated, though overall the number of courses and student has steadily grown over recent years. At the time of the inspection there were 127 students, with a balance of boys and girls. Just over a third of Year 11 students continue their education at the school. The Sixth Form provides a broad range of subjects and vocational courses that cater for a wide range of prior GCSE attainment. Access is open for students of any ability who are willing to work hard. As students come from a secondary modern school, most are of average or lower ability, compared with Sixth Form students nationally. There is a balance of those students who take one year vocational qualifications and others who combine advanced vocational courses with GCE A and AS Level courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The Sixth Form is smaller than average but is cost effective and makes a worthwhile contribution to further education in the local area. In 2001, standards improved though they remain below national averages. Sixth Form students largely come from the school and most achieve appropriately given their attainment on entry. Most make satisfactory or better progress in all curriculum areas. All students, including those with special educational needs, have a full and challenging programme of study that supports their educational, personal and social development. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects and courses, and good and occasionally very good, in health and social care, geography and art and design. Leadership and management are very good, particularly in terms of curriculum development, pastoral care and support of all students.

STRENGTHS

- The very good leadership contributes to the very positive and supportive ethos which is much appreciated by students and staff.
- The effective teaching supports good student progress in business, art and design and health and social care.
- The improved curriculum ensures that all students have a broad experience that combines vocational courses with academic subjects.
- Clear guidance to students, including careers education, which contributes to the increasing numbers progressing to higher education.
- The enhanced enrichment programme incorporates personal and social development as well as the key skills of ICT, communication and application of number.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The school has yet to establish sufficiently rigorous means of tracking students' academic progress and setting clear targets.
- The teaching and learning in some combined courses is not sufficiently planned and organised to ensure all students make the best progress.
- The good teaching practice in some courses that encourages independent and active learning, is not shared across all curriculum areas.
- Key skills teaching does not fully utilise the opportunities for development and assessment in the vocational and other courses.
- While the school is justifiably proud of the access and opportunities it provides for all students, some need to be more realistically matched to their course choices.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the Sixth Form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the Sixth Form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Business	Good. Standards are close to national average. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features, such as the high quality learning materials and strong assessment practice that supports independent learning and ensures students make good progress.
ICT	Satisfactory. Standards are below the national average though students have done well in recent examinations in terms of the progress they have made. Teachers have strong subject knowledge that they use effectively to extend students' knowledge and skills.
Leisure	Satisfactory. Standards are below the national average. Teaching is usually well informed and most students make sound progress. However, the range of teaching methods is limited and does not sufficiently involve students in their own learning. On occasions, teaching in the combined groups is less well planned and organised resulting in poorer quality learning.
Sports studies	Satisfactory. Students are beginning to study effectively in this new course. Teaching and learning are being developed satisfactorily and students respond enthusiastically.
Health and social care	Very good. Standards are below the national average though most students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. The teaching is very good and the varied activities ensure students are interested and involved in their learning.
Art and design	Good. Provision is very good in textiles. Standards overall are in line with national average and most students achieve very well. Teaching in textiles is excellent and standards of work in that area are high. Standards are less strong in photography.
Vocational art and design	Good. Standards are in line with those expected nationally and school value-added data indicates mainly good achievement in spite of the combined groups. The teaching of painting and drawing is a strength and is reflected in the students' work. Teaching is less strong in photography and ceramics.
Geography	Good. Standards are below the national average although most students achieve appropriately. The good teaching is knowledgeable, and effective use is made of questioning so developing students' understanding. Class activities limit more active student participation.
English	Satisfactory. Standards are below the national average although all students were successful in the AS Level in 2001. Teaching and learning ensures most students make satisfactory progress.

Some lessons were observed in a range of other subjects across the curriculum. In science, the first year of an A Level in biology is being studied. Results in manufacturing have been varied, but are generally lower than those achieved in other vocational courses. Students in music are at the expected level. The first entry for A level theatre studies will be next summer. Attainment is in line with national expectations. The broad range of the curriculum is complemented by a good personal and social education programme which includes careers education and guidance, preparation for driving and a religious education scheme that meets statutory requirements. All students experience a modular programme that includes a major vocational programme as well as a growing number AS and A Level courses. Each student works towards accreditation in the key skills of communication,

application of number and ICT and participate in two-week work placements usually related to their vocational choice in both Years 12 and 13. There is no scheduled provision for sports and recreational activities but many choose to take the sports leader award or otherwise participate in school sports and arts events. Many students actively participate in voluntary work such as mentoring younger pupils, organising charity events and teaching French in primary schools.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The school provides very effective guidance for students: it successfully integrates students of different interests and capacities including those with specific learning needs and others with physical disabilities. Students are appreciative of the support they receive from vocational staff and form tutors. Careers and higher education guidance is particularly good and increasing numbers of students successfully apply to universities and colleges.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Sixth Form	Leadership and management of the Sixth Form are very good. The director of Sixth Form studies is an experienced curriculum planner and works with other senior managers in providing a full and varied programme in what is a smaller than average Sixth Form. Students' attendance and personal development are well monitored but academic monitoring and target setting is not rigorous enough.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the Sixth Form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of courses meets the students' talents and career aspirations. • The teaching is good and students feel challenged to do their best. • Positive help and support are provided by the accessible Sixth Form staff. • There are very good personal relationships between staff and students and within the student body itself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particular courses combine first and second year programmes and different course levels, and on occasion these lessons are less well planned. • Students are not always clear about the standards they are currently achieving, notably in the non-vocational courses.

Students are very positive about the Sixth Form and the strengths they identified were generally confirmed by the inspection. They felt they were treated as young adults, recognised the value of having a full and structured programme and appreciated the efforts of staff to support their progress. The inspection also concurred with the few concerns that were raised by the students. In providing a wider curriculum reasonably cost effectively, the school does need to combine some courses but in some areas, such as leisure, the students feel, with justification, that lessons could be better planned. Students have variable knowledge of their predicted grades and current progress, though this was less evident in Year 12 where new procedures were being introduced. Students appreciate the attractive and well furnished Sixth Form student area. They are justified in thinking that the use of one open area for one or even two health and social care teaching groups is undesirable, even if the quality of teaching overcomes most of the potential problems.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. At the time of the last inspection, pupils' attainment was reported as well below average when they entered the school and remaining so at the end of each key stage. Overall, although there have been significant improvements in some subjects, the position currently is broadly the same.
2. Attainment on entry varies between year groups, but overall is well below average, although there are some indications that it improved when the school became over-subscribed and has improved again more recently. Between 25 to 30 per cent of children in the catchment area pass the eleven-plus and attend grammar schools, although because of the popularity of the school, a growing minority of higher attaining pupils put Westlands down as their first choice and do not try for a grammar school place. In a few cases this is because local grammar school provision is single sex. Thus, only a small proportion of pupils enter school with above average results in their National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6. In 2000, 14 per cent had achieved above average results in English, but only five per cent in mathematics. Consequently, a larger than average proportion of the year group arrive with below average National Curriculum results, more so in mathematics than in English and science. The school's excellent reputation for provision for pupils with special educational needs has resulted in a significantly higher number of such pupils entering the school, although those with statements which entitle them to places in the school's Dyslexia and Physically Disabled Provisions come from across the fully ability range, as do those identified as having emotional and behavioural difficulties. A small number of children enter school as a result of the preference given to pupils with musical aptitude. Some pupils in both Year 7 and Year 8, attended summer literacy or numeracy schools before entering the school. Records suggest that these pupils made good gains in literacy and numeracy standards during the fortnight.
3. Overall attainment at age 14 in 2001 in National Curriculum tests, when compared to all schools nationally, is well below average in mathematics and science, but broadly in line in English, which is a significant improvement on previous results. In 2000, results in English had been below the national average. Whilst the proportion achieving Level 5 or better has remained fairly constant over the last three years, the proportion achieving Level 6 or better has been rising, with a substantial jump to 24 per cent in 2001. This is in line with the average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Given that this is a secondary modern school, these results are very good. When compared to other secondary modern schools nationally, in 2001, the school's results were broadly in line, but compared to secondary modern schools with a similar proportion entitled to free school meals they were well above average. As nationally, girls do better than boys. In most years, the gap is wider than that nationally, although in 1999 it was much narrower with boys achieving near the national average.
4. Results in mathematics have been more varied. Results in 2000 were a significant improvement on the previous year's but in 2001 the proportion achieving Level 5 or better dropped, although the proportion achieving higher levels rose slightly. Compared to all schools and schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals nationally, results are well below average. However, pupils' attainment on entry to the school is lower than that in English and science. When compared to other secondary modern schools nationally, results in 2000 were broadly average. Those in 2001 are more puzzling. The proportion achieving Level 6 or better remains broadly average, whilst that achieving Level 5 or better is below average. However, the average point score achieved is well below average, suggesting that some groups of pupils are underachieving. Until this last year, boys have achieved better than girls in mathematics, by larger amount than nationally. In

2001, however, girls outperformed boys. There was a significant improvement in results in science in 2000, with a further improvement in 2001. In both years, results are well below national averages compared to all schools. Compared to all secondary modern schools nationally, in 2001, the proportion achieving Level 5 and Level 6 or better remains below average and the average point score, well below average, suggesting some underachievement by some groups of pupils. Compared to secondary modern schools nationally with a similar proportion entitled to free school meals, the average point score is below average, but the proportion achieving Level 6 or better is broadly average. Boys have achieved better than girls in recent years, although the gap in narrowed in 2001.

5. The school has carried out appropriate value added analyses based upon pupils' prior attainment in Key Stage 2 tests. These confirm that most pupils are achieving at or above expected levels based on their prior attainment but that there is variation between classes. Pupils also sit a bank of cognitive abilities tests in Years 7 and 9, which are used to track pupils' achievement. These are used to set targets for individual pupils, and can be used to set targets for classes, year groups and individual subjects. Results of teacher assessments in other subjects are less reliable as they are not moderated. In 2001, teacher assessments indicate a higher than average proportion working at Level 5 or better in art and design, design and technology, music and ICT, but lower in all other subjects. The proportion reported as working at Level 6 or above is around average in art and design, geography and ICT.

6. Overall, attainment at age 16 in GCSE varies between years. The proportions achieving both five or more and one or more grades A*-G have been consistently well above the average for all schools nationally. This exemplifies the success of the school in encouraging pupils of all abilities to attempt examinations. The proportion achieving five or more A*-C grades and the average point score per pupil are both well below average compared to all schools. (Average point score is calculated, based on eight points for an A* down to one point for a grade G.) When compared to similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, judgements remain the same, except the proportion achieving five or more A*-G is now very high. However, when pupils' prior attainment at age 14 is taken into account, the proportion achieving five or more A*-C grades is broadly average, whilst the average point score is a little above average. This indicates that achievement of the abler pupils is satisfactory, whilst that of the least able is good. However, when compared to other secondary modern schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, both the proportion achieving five or more A*-C and the average point score are below average. The school set relatively low targets for GCSE for 2000 and 2001 based upon prior attainment and surpassed these targets. The published target for 2002 is for the proportion achieving five or more A*-C grades to rise to 30 per cent. However, more challenging aspirational targets are set for departments and the school is aiming to surpass its published targets.

7. In 2001, results were above the national average in art and design and drama. In 2000, they were also above the national average in single science, French, rural science and music. Results in French and single science are affected by the size of the entry, much smaller than usual in French and larger than average in single science. When compared to results for secondary modern schools nationally, using 2000 averages, results in 2001 were also above average in French, history and food technology.

8. Results in both English language and English literature have declined over the last three years. In 1999, results in language were just above the national average for secondary modern schools at 44 per cent A*-C grades, but dropped to 34 per cent, below average, in 2001. Whilst girls achieve significantly better than boys, as nationally, it was results by girls that dropped in 2001, with no such decline with boys. Results in English literature in 2000 were well below the average for secondary modern schools, 38 per cent A*-C grades compared to 50 per cent, and declined further in 2001 to 34 per cent. However, a higher proportion of pupils sit English literature than is usual for secondary modern schools. Again

girls outperform boys, but in contrast to language both dropped in 2001. In contrast, results in mathematics, improved from 1999 to 2000 to 27 per cent A*-C, below the 33 per cent in all secondary modern schools and remained steady in 2001. In both years boys outperformed girls, the reverse to the national picture, although the gap was narrower in 2001 with boys declining and girls improving: another contrast to English results. Results in science are complicated by the smaller than average proportion taking double science rather than single science compared to nationally. Results in double science appear in line with national averages, those in single science above in 2000 and around average in 2001. However, if this is then translated into the proportion who achieve A*-C in either single or double science, it is well below average compared to all schools. Compared to secondary modern schools, 35 per cent achieved A*-C in 2000, compared to 36 per cent nationally but this dropped significantly to 24 per cent in 2001. In 2000, more girls achieved a higher grade in science than boys, as nationally, but results of girls dropped dramatically in 2001. Whilst the school can point to the ability of the entry in 2001 being lower than that of 2000, this does not explain the variations in results between subjects and between boys and girls, which warrant further investigation.

9. Amongst other subjects the best results are achieved in arts subjects. Although not compulsory, a high proportion of pupils study art and design, music or drama, although currently dance is only taken as part of physical education. Results in drama have been consistently well above the national averages for all schools and secondary modern schools. In 2001, 84 per cent achieved grades A*-C with a large number achieving grade B or better. Boys and girls achieve similar results. Overall art and design subjects, results have dropped a little since 1999 when over three quarters achieved grades A*-C to 68 per cent, a little above the national average. However, this obscures excellent results in some aspects of art and design. In 2001, 100 per cent achieved grades A*-C in graphics, 90 per cent in textiles, 77 per cent in ceramics, 68 per cent in drawing and painting and 55 per cent in photography, but only 28 per cent in an unendorsed course. However, whilst boys results are around the average nationally for boys, girls results are exceptional with around 90 per cent achieving grades A*-C. Results in music have been more varied. Whilst all except one achieved grades A*-C in 2000, only half did in 2001, about average for a secondary modern school nationally. Boys consistently perform well. Results in physical education have declined over the last three years, from 41 per cent in 1999, around the average for secondary modern schools to 31 per cent in 2001. Whilst girls outperformed boys in 2000, the small number in 2001 performed well below the standard of boys.

10. Results in design and technology were very low in 2000, but improved back to previous levels in 2001 with around a third achieving grades A*-C in both graphic products and resistant materials, a little below the average for secondary modern schools. The small number of girls entered achieve considerably better than boys. Results in food technology have improved substantially from very low in 1999 to close to the national average in 2001, with boys and girls achieving similar results. Results in child development are less good, but as nationally the subject tends to cater for pupils of below average ability. Results in business studies have declined over the last three years from 35 per cent grades A*-C in 1999, just below average for secondary modern schools, to 23 per cent in 2001. Girls consistently achieve better than boys, although the gap narrowed in 2001. Results in ICT have dropped significantly since 1999, when 37 per cent achieved grades A*-C, a little below the 42 per cent average for secondary modern schools. In 2001, only 13 per cent achieved grades A*-C. Results in rural science vary considerably each year. In 2000, 48 per cent achieved grades A*-C, above the national average. This dropped to 13 per cent in 2001 because of the ability of the group. Results in the GCSE course of office applications, were sound in 2001 with half achieving higher grades, about average nationally.

11. Results in French were above the national average in 2000 and below in 2001, although still above the average for secondary modern schools. However, less than a quarter of the year took French in 2001 and even less in 2000. Most pupils follow a certificate of achievement course in either French or Spanish. As nationally, girls achieved significantly better than boys in GCSE French. In 2000 there was a small GCSE entry for Spanish, who achieved less good results.

12. Results in geography have remained fairly constant. In 2001, 33 per cent achieved grades A*-C, a little below average for a secondary modern school, with boys and girls achieving similar results. Entries in history have been low over the last two years. Whilst results were well below the average for secondary modern schools in 2000, they rose to 54 per cent in 2001, close to average for all schools. However, there were only thirteen pupils entered. All the higher grades were achieved by girls. About a quarter of the year group took a GCSE course in travel and tourism. Results in 2001 were very low with only four per cent achieving grades A*-C.

13. The school celebrates pupils' achievements in other areas. In sport this has included a Sixth Form student being selected to play for Tottenham Hotspur's ladies football team, while another four girls play for the Kent ladies team and a Year 8 boy has recently been retained by Chelsea Football Club. Within the school there are county standard swimmers, and at national or south-east area levels a speedway champion, a weightlifting champion, a judo player, an ice skater, a gymnast for sports acrobatics and a golfer. A physically disabled Year 11 pupil has been honoured for her commitment to a Swale wheelchair basketball club. In athletics, nine pupils were selected to represent Swale schools in the Kent championships. There have been successes at local and county level in football, hockey, netball, athletics, basketball, rounders and cricket. Pupils who excel at sports are rewarded with Sports Colours. Two pupils were honoured with national awards for their bravery. One was a Sixth Form student who was awarded the Diana, Princess of Wales memorial award for her exceptional progress after being diagnosed with breast cancer and the other was a Year 7 boy who was awarded the Child of Achievement award after suffering horrific burns in an accident. Members of the Young Farmers Club regularly achieve outstanding success at the Kent County Show, where animals from the farm are exhibited. Sixth Form GNVQ students were the Kent winners of the Lloyds TSB Business Challenge. Pupils achieved success in organising a political campaign reflecting the General Election and were supported by the local MP and other constituency candidates. Two Year 8 girls were the Kent regional winners for the History Channel's photographic project. Over 30 pupils had their poems on the environment included in a book published nationally. The choir appears in the annual Mayor of Swale's joint schools' music concert and the choir and various ensembles present concerts both at the school and to various local groups and primary schools. Pupil drama productions are presented during the summer and at Christmas and GCSE drama pupils also perform their examination pieces to staff and parents. Pupils are rewarded for their good work with Westlands Notes of Praise, Curriculum Merits, a range of Headteacher's Certificates and by having their name entered in the Roll of Honour. They are rewarded for their achievements in reading with Reading Awards. Pupils' art and textiles work is displayed in the local library and in the Kent County Council offices. A Sixth Form student's photography, drawings and paintings have been included in a travelling exhibition to Russia. Sixth Form students have painted a 50-foot mural at a local Special School, featuring Aboriginal, Japanese and Islamic art.

Standards in lessons and in the work surveys

14. Extensive studies of work completed this year, both through a general work survey and separate subject work surveys, and through observation of standards in lessons, reveal significant variations between subjects. Overall attainment was above average in 15 per cent of lessons across the school, average in 40 per cent and below average in 45 per cent. These figures are sound for a secondary modern school. The above average standards

were observed in upper sets in some subjects and in mixed ability groups in art and design. The proportion of lessons where standards are generally average or above average obviously varies according to the grouping arrangements in a subject. In some subjects, taught in sets based on prior attainment, standards in higher sets were only average, as in most history and geography classes, whereas standards are well above average in most art and design classes in all years. Teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough in some classes, both in higher, middle and lower sets, with too little differentiation to meet the needs of individuals. Grouping arrangements are sometimes having a negative impact on standards. Some higher attaining pupils in some subjects are not in the highest groups, because their attainment is less good in other subjects. In contrast, some of average and lower attainment are disadvantaged in some subjects by not mixing with higher attaining pupils and gaining from their greater insights.

15. Pupils, who have special educational needs, working in the Learning Support rooms, achieve well and make good progress towards their targets. In order to help them retain their learning, special needs teachers and assistants give very good support and use a variety of methods, using targets that are appropriate for the pupils' needs and development. Much of the success of pupils is due to the patience and skill of the teachers and mentors, who work very hard to provide appropriate work and challenges. In the Dyslexia Provision, pupils achieve well and make good progress. Pupils who are referred to the pupil support provision work according to their own mainstream timetables, and achievement is recorded in these subjects not in the Provision room. Likewise pupils who have physical disabilities follow the timetables of their own classes and have no separate lessons.

16. Throughout the subjects of the curriculum, when taken overall, pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards their targets. Teachers or tutors set targets in literacy, numeracy, and for behaviour. These targets are short, attainable steps, which enable pupils to make good gains in learning and in self-confidence. Almost all pupils achieve grades A*-G in GCSE, and the assisted support groups, attended instead of an option, play a significant part in this success. They are very well focused and planned around pupils' own targets.

17. Standards observed in English were generally below average, but by Year 11 were higher than the most recent GCSE results suggest. In Years 7-9, pupils have limited skills of oral collaboration, but work effectively in pairs and answer direct questions confidently. Standards in reading are improving in response to well taught reading skills. For example in Year 9, higher attaining pupils identified implied meaning in a text, and demonstrated a secure knowledge of bias and emotive language. All pupils successfully tackle a Shakespeare play by the time they are 14. A Year 8 class displayed an awareness of the main characters in *The Tempest*, and at least a basic knowledge of the plot. In this lesson, pupils eagerly read aloud extracts, fluently and with good expression. Pupils are making good progress in Years 7-9 and improving progress in Years 10 and 11. By Year 11, there are significant differences in pupils' understanding of texts. For example, higher attaining pupils could explain that Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde was a metaphor for humankind, and why. They engaged with the symbolism of the piece when they realised that Hyde grew as the story went on. In contrast a group of lower attainers only understood some poems by Simon Armitage at a basic level, not understanding idiomatic English expressions, but able to use a dictionary effectively to support their learning.

18. Across the curriculum, pupils' speaking and listening skills are below average, but pupils are capable of careful listening and have some skills of oral collaboration. There are opportunities for pupils to speak more formally on such occasions as school assemblies and year council meetings, but not all pupils are given these opportunities. There are better opportunities for public performance in school productions, which pupils greatly appreciate.

19. Pupils do not read widely to support their learning. Low achievers have difficulty in reading much beyond the simple texts that are presented to them in lessons. Pupils have adequate research skills. They use CD ROMs confidently, and use a dictionary and thesaurus appropriately. They understand the use of an index. Their leisure reading, however, is undemanding. Only a few read age-appropriate fiction. A high proportion of pupils are content to look at magazines that reflect their leisure interests. Although the library takes a broadsheet newspaper, pupils generally prefer to read tabloids if they read newspapers at all. There is evidence that pupils' lack of reading capacity is adversely affecting progress in history as well as English. Pupils do not read rapidly enough to cover what is required. In ICT, guidance notes for GCSE course work require higher reading skills than many possess. In religious education, the reading set is too difficult for most pupils.

20. Pupils' writing does not always support their learning. In science, writing standards support practicals and projects. Pupils produce posters, pictures and graphs to illustrate their work. Pupils are taught to take effective notes in a range of subjects. Key words are displayed in classrooms and pupils learn to spell them. There is, however, a lack of extended, independent writing in subjects throughout the school. In history, for example, poor writing skills do not enable pupils to communicate what they know. This hinders progress. Much writing produced in the school contains errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, but improves when it is redrafted.

21. In mathematics, many pupils enter the school with standards that are well below average. In Years 7-9, whilst higher attaining pupils develop the skills necessary to generalise expressions and use algebra, average and lower attaining pupils develop their numerical skills practically. Progress at this stage is satisfactory, but in Years 10 and 11 it is good. However, the extension work for entry to the higher-level paper is only taught after school to a few pupils. Higher attaining pupils can solve a range of linear and quadratic equations with confidence, whilst the numerical skills of the least able are such that they can successfully enter GCSE at the Foundation Level.

22. Pupils' numeracy skills are sufficient for them to access all areas of the curriculum. There is a policy for numeracy across the curriculum and in most departments. There has also been an audit of skills used across the curriculum. Numerical skills are regularly reinforced in mathematics lessons and many pupils enjoy practising these skills. There was a summer numeracy school held in the school for two weeks during the last summer holiday. This was designed to reinforce and develop the skills of the Year 6 pupils who attended. The scheme included number games and puzzles and a range of activities and visits. The results indicate that the time spent increased pupils' confidence and abilities. A local advisor, who came to visit the course, confirmed this and praised the raising of standards of achievement of all who attended. This is likely to continue in the future. Pupils use a range of skills in most of their subjects and are successful in mental calculations in foreign languages and history. They use a range of data handling skills in geography and interpret data given in a variety of different forms. In science, the graph drawing skills, measurement of time, temperature mass, and length are all competently used in appropriate situations. Spreadsheets, which involve the use of formulae and calculations, are also used in ICT lessons.

23. In the other key skill of ICT, attainment is below average, but has risen in Year 11 compared to the standards achieved last summer, because the teaching of coursework has improved. The school has strengthened the management of the use of ICT by all subjects. ICT is used effectively by some subjects, and meets statutory requirements. For example, in mathematics the well-planned use of ICT improves pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding. The use of ICT is integrated into the scheme of work for modern languages and pupils complete a good range of work with ICT across all years. In business studies, pupils show independence in working effectively with ICT to support their learning. However, there are gaps in provision where statutory requirements are not met. For example, control work in design and technology is not yet covered for all pupils, although the equipment and

software have recently been purchased. Data logging in science is not yet taught to all pupils as the equipment has only recently been purchased. As a consequence standards in ICT are not as high as they should be in aspects of the subject.

24. Progress in science is satisfactory in both key stages. Pupils enter with standards well below average. Examination of work shows that last year's rise in standards at age 14 has been maintained and that standards at age 16 have returned to the level achieved in 2000. For example, Year 9 pupils understand what happens to magnesium when it is heated and why it gains weight, whilst a top set in Year 11 demonstrated that they understand how genetic engineering might be undertaken. Standards in design and technology are improving. Pupils acquire encouraging levels of practical skills, which they clearly enjoy. However, higher attaining pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities to develop personal learning skills and to explore problems and issues of particular concern to them. Pupils are making steady progress.

25. Standards in arts subjects are generally higher than in other subjects. Attainment in art is very good. By Year 11, pupils display a very good control of media and are confident in using pastel, pencil, acrylics, watercolour and charcoal. They produce some exciting three dimensional work. In ceramics, they can blend colours and paint intricate and complex designs. In photography they have developed skills in using equipment and produce a range of artistic effects. But it is in textiles that the best results are achieved, where, for example, they can produce delicate batik work based on Tiffany glass and make creative use of a variety of materials and natural forms. In music, pupils' performance skills are good. By age 16, they confidently perform on a range of instruments in varying styles and can explain the impact that the development of musical instruments has had on different styles of music. However, the creative element is not so well developed. Compositions tend to be at a basic level, lacking style and structure, although there are signs of improvements. Pupils have been handicapped by inadequate use of ICT, although a new recording studio will improve this. Standards in music are developed through a wide range of extracurricular provision. Standards in drama are very good at age 16, and good at age 14. In Years 7-9, pupils understand the importance of 'building, accepting and not blocking' when improvising spontaneously. In Years 10 and 11, pupils demonstrate their understanding of character motivation and can create dramatic tension, focus and mood. In a piece, for example, using 'Lord, what fools these mortals be' as a starting point, pupils used repetition, rhythm, gesture and contrast between silence and sound to create a moving and thoughtful piece on pollution.

26. In contrast, achievement in physical education is satisfactory, although some lessons were seen where it was good, including Year 11 GCSE pupils. Progress of the higher attainers is unsatisfactory in many lessons. In a very good dance lesson, pupils were encouraged to develop not only skills, but also what constitutes quality of movement and to incorporate this into their work creating their own movements in groups. Similarly, in a very good gymnastics lesson, pupils developed complex balance positions and incorporated these into a coherent and fairly fluent sequence of movements. Pupils have good opportunities to extend and develop their skills in a good range of extracurricular activities.

27. Achievement in geography is satisfactory, with a trend of steady improvement. Pupils have good knowledge about places and geographical facts, but for many, weak basic skills hinder communication of their geographical understanding. However, higher attaining Year 11 pupils understood the implications of visits by 'green tourists' to the Galapagos Islands. Pupils experience insufficient fieldwork to develop a practical understanding of the subject. By age 14, pupils develop a good understanding of chronology in history and make good progress in developing a more sophisticated understanding of concepts, such as causation. For example, when learning about the English Civil War, pupils learn to distinguish between religious, political and financial causes. By Year 11, pupils learn to empathise with various interpretations of events associated with the Cold War. Setting arrangements limit the progress of some lower attaining pupils, detracting from their ability to discuss issues or

express themselves accurately in written work. In religious education, the higher attaining pupils who are following a GCSE short course, show a good understanding of a Christian perspective on natural and man-made suffering. Whilst they can adequately express their views, many lower attaining pupils only record basic information. Standards in the GCSE course in travel and tourism are low. These relate directly to some unsatisfactory teaching pupils receive.

28. In Years 7-9, pupils' achievements in French are good. Most pupils make good progress in the four language skills. Listening skills are well developed and progress is made in writing throughout the key stage. By age 14, some pupils are beginning to have an awareness of basic grammatical patterns. Most pupils do not carry their language learning through to GCSE Level. However, those who do tend to have good pronunciation and intonation. Those following a Certificate of Achievement course in French or Spanish generally achieve well related to their ability. Standards in business education are generally below average, although pupils make satisfactory progress during the course. Pupils develop a range of skills and are able, for instance, to manipulate financial data successfully and have an understanding of key terms, such as the tertiary sector and market share.

29. Almost all parents expressed positive views about standards achieved in the school. Of those who returned the questionnaire, 94 per cent felt their children were making good progress, although a few thought they could be challenged more in some subjects.

Sixth Form

30. The Sixth Form has grown in size and the cohort is drawn almost entirely from what is a designated modern school, with significantly fewer higher attaining pupils on entry. Within those limitations, the Sixth Form is open access and accommodates the full range of students including a number with special educational needs. Although the school offers an increasing range of general education courses, such as GCE A and AS Level, all students in the Sixth Form take a vocational course either as a GNVQ intermediate one year programme or as a double award Advanced Vocational Level programme. Most students, therefore, take a combination of vocational and general courses, as well as PHSE and key skills courses.

31. Over the last three years, standards in the vocational courses have fluctuated though overall they have been below the national average and in some areas, well below. In both 1999 and 2000, about two thirds of students taking the intermediate course (which is equivalent to 4 GCSE grades A*-C) were successful and that was above the national average for all schools and colleges. In 2001, this fell back to under half as a greater number of students with special educational needs continued their education and the new external examinations for the courses proved more challenging.

32. Advanced Vocational Level results have fluctuated even more widely. In 1999, two thirds of students passed what was then called the GNVQ Advanced in one of the five vocational areas. The best performing courses were art and design and manufacturing, where all students were successful. The least successful was business, where only a quarter of students passed. The year 2000 showed a big decline in standards at GNVQ Advanced Level with just 30 per cent passing, although with subsequent resits this improved to 40 per cent. Much of this was the result of all business students being unsuccessful. In 2001, standards rose significantly and the number of GNVQ Advanced students nearly doubled. Of the 48 students, over three quarters gained the qualification. Art and design, health and social care and business all achieved pass rates above national averages. For business this represented a substantial improvement with seven students gaining distinctions and three gaining merits. Leisure and tourism students did least well.

33. When student performances are compared using average point scores that take account of the grades achieved, the overall standards compare less favourably against all schools and colleges nationally. This is particularly reflected in the 2001 figures for first year assessments for the new Advanced Vocational Levels, where nearly two thirds achieved passes but only two students achieved grade B and five students a grade C. Compared against the national figures, overall standards were below average although business students were at least in line with those nationally with over 90 percent being successful. However, standards were well below average in the two leisure and tourism courses and in manufacturing.

34. Over recent years, students have increasingly taken GCE A Level and now AS Level courses in addition to their vocational programmes. Standards have been well below national averages and comparatively weaker than students' attainment in the vocational courses. In 2001, just over a half of students passed compared with over four fifths nationally. Students were more successful in the first year of the AS Level with nearly three quarters being successful, though that is still below the national average. More positively, increasing numbers of students are achieving higher grades with nine of the fifteen A Level students getting grades B or C. An area of strength was art and design and particularly art textiles. In 2001, all the nine art and design students passed at A or AS Level and in textiles, students achieved one grade A, three Bs and two Cs.

35. In work and lessons seen in the inspection, standards closely match the most recent results and overall are below national average for all schools and colleges. The notable exceptions are the business and art and design courses where standards are in line with those nationally. Standards are high in textiles, where students' work shows a good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of techniques and processes such as batik, appliqué, embroidery and fabric painting. Standards in business have improved considerably in the last year and are now in line with those nationally. In one lesson, Year 13 students could confidently discuss the different motivational theories and link them to different organisational practices in their case study materials. In most areas at both GNVQ Intermediate Level and in the various Advanced Level courses, students have weaker than average literacy and have more difficulty in fully developing their skills in analysis and evaluation. For example, in A Level ICT, students show initiative and demonstrate independent research and study skills but there are some weaknesses in particular aspects of their work, such as the testing strategy for their system design ideas and evaluating their work against clear criteria.

36. Most students come in to the Sixth Form with lower than average entry qualifications and basic skills and, given that, make satisfactory or better progress and achieve well. In some areas, where there are combined groups, or lesson planning is less structured and challenging, progress is slower. During the inspection this was more evident in some of the English and leisure course lessons. Not surprisingly, students achieve better than expected in the more successful courses, such as art and design, health and social care and business. Students with special educational needs and others with a physical disability, make good progress. This was well illustrated in a GNVQ intermediate health and social care lesson where a number of students with special educational needs were benefiting from structured support that developed their understanding and literacy skills.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

37. The attitudes, values and personal development of pupils are good and make an important contribution to the quality of their learning.

38. Most pupils have good attitudes to lessons and to their learning. They show interest in their work, concentrate very well and enjoy the activities prepared for them. Most pupils come to lessons with positive attitudes and a willingness to learn: they ask and answer questions, join in discussions and contribute well during lessons. Most pupils are good-humoured and relaxed, generally enthusiastic about lessons and work well even when they find the lesson difficult. For example, in an English in Year 10, pupils adopted a style suitable for a TV chat show when considering the question of who was to blame for the tragedy in Romeo and Juliet. They concentrated intensely, responding well to the inventive approach offered to them. In a French lesson, Year 7 pupils were very enthusiastic learners, striving to be accurate and develop a good accent. In a Year 8 geography lesson, pupils really enjoyed their teacher's lively presentation when considering the effects of erosion. Again, in art, pupils are often totally immersed in their work, such as the Year 9 pupils who were making lino prints based on their observational drawings of plants and shells. They discussed their own and others' work sensitively and presented their creations with pride. Similarly, Year 11 drama pupils were absolutely focused on their work when discussing the use of monologue. Occasionally the attitudes of a small number of pupils are unsatisfactory. This usually occurs when the teaching fails to inspire and interest them or where the teacher fails to manage their high spirits and channel them into productive work and learning.

39. Pupils' attitudes to school in general are very good. They enjoy being at school and enthusiastically take part in the vast range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, whether recreational or educational. Many pupils represent the school in sporting and musical events, and in local and national competitions. Most pupils are proud of their school and there is very little litter, damage or graffiti.

40. Behaviour of pupils around the school and in lessons is good overall and for the vast majority of pupils is very good. Most staff have high expectations of how pupils should behave and pupils respond accordingly. Pupils think the rewards and sanctions are fair and usually have a positive effect on the standards of behaviour in school. Through the year councils, pupils have begun reviewing the school and classroom rules to add their perspective to that of the staff. At lunchtimes and breaks, pupils relax in a good-humoured and lively atmosphere with minimum supervision even when busy doing work or in clubs. Measures to counter bullying are given a high priority throughout the school in tutorial time, assemblies, and personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils report there is very little bullying and if it arises, they are confident that it will be dealt with quickly and sensitively.

41. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils who have special educational needs are very good. This is because teachers and assistants set very high standards and expectations in these small groups. Pupils understand clearly what is expected of them and they respond accordingly. Relationships have been established very well, and teachers are very good role models for pupils, showing respect, and interest in all the work that pupils do. There is a very good atmosphere of positive learning in all the Learning Support rooms, and pupils enjoy their work, sharing good humour and very good work habits.

42. During the last academic year, there were five permanent exclusions and 66 fixed term exclusions involving 45 pupils. Exclusions are clearly the final stage in a structured approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour and are not a sanction that is used lightly. All exclusions are fully documented. Parents are involved at all stages and generally support the school's approach and methods. In order to keep the number of fixed term exclusions low, the school has funded the Pupil Support Provision. Pupils who might otherwise receive a fixed term exclusion are either sent to the provision for a day or two, or, in a few cases, are sent on a regular basis from specific lessons for a longer period. The Provision is also used to support the re-entry of poor attenders or those with emotional

problems into school. In the Pupil Support Provision, very clear guidelines are set for behaviour, presentation of work, and appearance. Pupils respect these and generally apply themselves very well to their work due to very high expectations from the staff. This provision has been very successful in limiting the number of formal exclusions.

43. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are of a very high quality and create a supportive and caring atmosphere in which pupils feel secure and comfortable. These very good relationships have a positive impact on pupils' response and attitudes in lessons. Pupils are valued both as individuals and for their contribution to the daily life of school, as can be seen from the way prefects and council representatives perform their duties. Around school, pupils naturally help each other and pay considerable attention towards those pupils with physical disabilities. They show compassion towards the suffering of others as can be seen in their untiring fund raising efforts for local, national and international charities. As a school they sponsor two boys in India. Discussions in many lessons illustrated pupils' acceptance and tolerance of others well. For example, in religious education, Year 10 pupils empathised with the suffering of a young boy dying of cancer, articulating feelings of sadness and pity.

44. The school has created an environment which gives pupils confidence to be themselves and to grow personally and emotionally. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to take on responsibility within school. Year 11 prefects are selected after nominations by staff and they carry out their duties responsibly and seriously. Year 8 pupils act as buddies and friends for Year 7 pupils, particularly in the early days, helping them to find their way around. Year 7 pupils revisit their primary schools with their head of year to talk to Year 6 pupils about life in secondary school. Representatives from each tutor group attend the year council meetings and feel that they have a genuine voice in their school. Pupils are very responsive to current events. Last year the school held mock elections to coincide with the general election and more recently pupils initiated a book of condolence and a memorial of flowers to acknowledge the loss of life caused by the terrorist attacks in America.

45. Attendance at the school is satisfactory. The attendance for the last academic year was 91.4 per cent, which was very similar to the national average for all schools. Unauthorised absence (0.4 per cent) is consistently lower than the national average. Registers are taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. Most tutors make good use of both registration times, creating a purposeful start and preparing pupils well for the day ahead.

Sixth Form

46. The attitudes and values of pupils in the Sixth Form are very good. In lessons, students mostly show great interest in their work and are prepared to work hard. For example, in health and social care, students are highly motivated and actively involved in their learning. Year 12 students were discussing health and social services care settings and self-esteem and self-concept in relation to people with special needs. They were prepared to talk about their feelings openly and sensitively. Leisure students showed great interest in the impact of media on holiday resorts and enjoyed the lively presentation, which used *Fawlty Towers* as an example.

47. Students enjoy their time in the Sixth Form. Relationships between students and between students and staff are very good which results in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. The Sixth Form study area and common room is treated with respect and students appreciate the facilities and the freedom they are given. They work well together as a team, organising duty rotas to keep their social areas tidy and negotiating times for the choice of music to give fair shares to all. Students are expected to play a role in the main school and do so willingly. The head and deputy boy and girl work hard, representing the school at many functions, and Sixth Form students organise many of the front of house

aspects at concerts and productions. The Sixth Form council acts as a genuine voice of student opinion. Some students have trained as peer counsellors and act as an extra level of support for younger pupils. They have a youth action award for this. Others help Year 8 pupils with their reading and run activities and clubs both in their own school and in some of the local primary schools. A number of students worked in the summer literacy and numeracy schools and are currently organising a trip to take Year 7 pupils to the pantomime.

48. Attendance in the Sixth Form is satisfactory. Students register with their tutors daily and tutorial time is used well.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

49. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was good in over half the lessons observed, but varied between subjects, with some unsatisfactory teaching in almost all subjects. Weaknesses were identified in teachers' expectations and the clarity of learning objectives. Whilst a wide range of teaching strategies were used in English, art and design and music, there was too much teacher direction in some subjects.

50. The quality of both teaching and pupils' learning has improved since the last inspection. Overall, it is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In general, pupils are keen to learn, particularly where teachers adopt an approach which encourages them to become active learners and to develop independent learning skills. Over the whole school, including the Sixth Form, teaching was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of the 295 lessons observed, including 33 per cent where it was good and 29 per cent where it was very good or excellent. The proportion of very good and excellent teaching is high. It is spread across all year groups, but is particularly high with Year 7, where it was 44 per cent of lessons seen, compared to around 30 per cent in Years 8 - 11. However, the proportion of good or better teaching was higher in Years 10 and 11, 68 per cent compared to 60 per cent in Years 7-9 and 54 per cent Post 16, with slightly more unsatisfactory teaching occurring in Years 7-9. Teaching was good or better in over 70 per cent of lessons in Year 10 and Year 7, with the highest proportion of just satisfactory lessons in Year 8. Overall, 6 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory or poor. Nearly half the unsatisfactory or poor teaching observed occurred with Year 9, 16 per cent of lessons seen in that year, but with none in Year 8.

51. The quality of pupils' learning tends to match that of teaching. However, whilst overall, the proportion of good or better learning is the same as teaching, there is a little less very good learning, especially in Years 9 - 11. Examples of very good or excellent teaching occur across almost all subjects. Examples of excellence were observed in the teaching of art and design, modern foreign languages, English and history. In the main school, teaching was very good or excellent in over half the lessons in art and design, English, modern foreign languages and drama, and all specialist lessons for pupils with special educational needs. Teaching was also good or better in at least 60 per cent of lessons in these subjects, but also in history, geography, PSHE, music and business education. Some unsatisfactory teaching was observed in a range of subjects, but more than once in physical education, science, travel and tourism, modern foreign languages and geography.

52. There is a significant amount of good teaching in the school, much of which could become very good if the best practices were adopted more consistently. In the best lessons, pupils are involved fully in their learning. An approach is adopted which encourages both active and independent learning and pupils are encouraged to work in groups and individually, and opportunities for practical activities are taken. In some

subjects, the organisation of pupil grouping has a negative impact on the quality of teaching, with some larger groups of lower and middle attaining pupils causing difficulties in classroom management with some teachers.

53. Significant action has been taken by the school since the last inspection to improve the quality of teaching and learning. It has been a constant feature of the school's improvement plan, with current emphases on improving the quality of homework, developing approaches specific to learning preferences of boys and girls, cross curricular approaches to literacy and numeracy, diagnostic marking and the use of ICT, amongst others. The emphasis of the school's good quality assurance system has been on improving teaching and learning and external advice has been sought where appropriate. Detailed analysis of all examination and test results is providing subject teachers with good information about their teaching groups. Access to high quality professional development to improve performance was recognised in the award as Investor in People and is linked closely to the school's performance management procedures. Good advice is provided through policies on homework and lesson planning, and good practice in subjects is summarised in a document, 'Something that works for us.' Evidence from teachers, pupils and parents supports inspection evidence that the quality of teaching is improving. However, there are still some significant variations between, and sometimes within, departments in the quality of teaching and learning. Whilst many teachers know what makes for good learning, there is not a shared understanding by all teachers. Pupils interviewed during the inspection praised the quality of much teaching, but also identified inconsistencies between teachers, particularly over classroom management and their encouragement for pupils to become independent and active learners.

54. Across the curriculum, teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are good. Many teachers have a good understanding of how best to teach their subjects to pupils of average or lower attainment, although some adopt strategies, which are too teacher directed, whilst others are less confident in using strategies which challenge the most able. In English, teachers' subject knowledge is very good, enabling them to introduce the national literacy strategy with ease. In art and design and some subjects in design and technology, for example, teachers' enthusiasms for their specialisms are infectious. Teachers of ICT have good subject knowledge and give clear step-by-step instructions in their demonstrations. In French and Spanish, teachers use the foreign languages extensively to the great benefit of pupils' listening skills, although occasionally too much English is used with the opposite effect. Good subject knowledge in music enables teachers to demonstrate skills to pupils, as with a Year 11 group where the teacher effectively used instrumental expertise to demonstrate to pupils how to link a series of musical phrases into an extended performance.

55. Overall, teachers' planning of lessons is good. During the inspection week, planning was often very good, but plans in teachers' 'planners' are sometimes less detailed, with too little planning for pupils' individual needs. As a consequence, teachers' expectations whilst generally sound, are not consistently good. In the better lessons, teachers' expectations are high and pupils are challenged to learn well. In these lessons, teachers plan well for a range of activities. In Year 9 English, for example, pupils successfully analysed an article "*Bye bye Baglady*" in terms of language, structure, layout and mood. In this rigorous lesson, the pace was brisk, and highly appropriate supplementary material promoted paired analysis and helped pupils learn, with all able to quote from the article to support the assertions they made in the analysis. In many lessons, teachers plan well for the inclusion of girls and boys and those with special educational needs. In the best, tasks are varied to meet the needs of individual pupils. In some, such as in English, planning for those of higher ability is a strength, with special sessions for the gifted and talented. In science, amongst others, lessons are planned and organised with timings to deliver definite objectives. However, in a few mathematics lessons there is a lack of structure and insufficient challenge provided for pupils. In some design and technology lessons expectations are high, but teachers fail to make sufficient cross-references between their experiences in the different materials used

in the subject. Teacher expectations in business education are high, with pupils constantly challenged to develop their skills. They are also high in drama, where, in the best lessons, pupils are constantly encouraged to improve their work and questioning is focussed to enable genuine reflection and evaluation to take place. In some lessons in physical education, however, there is poor planning and organisation, with an inappropriate range of activities, which results in uncooperative pupils. Across the curriculum teachers work hard, but do not always push pupils to work hard enough.

56. In the best lessons, teaching is exciting and a range of teaching strategies is used. Teachers stimulate and challenge pupils to do their best. For example, a Year 10 English lesson on Romeo and Juliet took the form of a television quiz show, to which pupils responded energetically and gained in oral confidence and knowledge of the play. Planning and delivery in drama is both imaginative and effective, especially in Years 10 and 11. Its strength is the emphasis placed on drama skills and techniques, which help provide pupils with an understanding of the cultural tradition within which drama takes place. Across a range of subjects, teachers' expositions are generally clear. For example, in better mathematics lessons, introductions are delivered at a good pace with constant checking of pupils' understanding. Subject content, in these lessons is presented in short manageable sections with time limited exercises used to sustain pace and concentration. Pupils are encouraged to become involved by working their solution to a question on the board in front of the class. A good mix of theory and practical is used in better science lessons, with pupils' ideas sought and then developed by means of skilfully posed teacher questions. An example was a Year 10 lesson relating function to structure in skin, with pupils generating ideas with the teacher interjecting just the right questions. In contrast, in weaker science lessons, teachers deliver facts, which pupils copy or use to complete worksheets without real understanding. In art and design, teachers' questioning and demonstrations are skilful. A feature of the best lessons in physical education is varied teaching strategies and a sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning. Across many subjects, too little opportunity is provided for pupils to discuss, with opportunities for discussion between pupils instead becoming dialogue between the teacher and individual pupils. Teaching in religious education, whilst satisfactory, is too teacher centred, with insufficient use of appropriate resources. This limits the learning, especially of lower attaining pupils.

57. Pupils' learning is affected directly by both the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. Where teaching fails to develop interest and enthusiasm, learning is less good. Pupils are often lively and most teachers channel their enthusiasms constructively into good learning. Learning is best, whatever their ability, when pupils are encouraged to become actively involved. Consequently, much of the best learning occurs in those subjects where pupils are most successful. In all areas of art and design, music and drama, pupils are encouraged both to develop as independent learners and to collaborate effectively in groups. In music, enthusiastic teaching contributes to pupils' positive attitudes to the subject and promotes good learning. Pupils respond well during performance sessions, listen attentively, applaud and make sensible comments on how they could be improved. In photography and textiles, some less motivated pupils become totally involved in their individual projects and, for example, use the darkroom in a disciplined manner and display real pleasure and satisfaction over their completed pieces of work. As a result of good learning in drama, involving a range of skills and techniques, in a lesson on status, most pupils were able to demonstrate how posture, expression, tone of voice, eye contact and spatial relationships communicate the relative status of different characters. In geography, pupils acquire geographical skills through effective teaching which uses a range of resources, such as film and practical demonstrations, as in that where a teacher pretended to be a glacier. However, in two geography lessons, resources were not matched to pupils' needs and were uninspiring. In both history and geography, limited opportunity is given to pupils to participate in field trips to gain first hand experiences of the subjects, in contrast to the good range of visits and exchanges organised in languages. Practical involvement on

the school farm stimulates the interests of pupils in rural science. Teaching of basic skills is done well in literacy lessons in Years 7-9. For example, practical ideas booklets are used to improve pupils' vocabulary and familiarise them with technical terms used in literacy criticism. Starter activities in many mathematics lessons positively enhance numeracy development.

58. A particular quality of teaching in many subjects is the good relationships that teachers have with their pupils. Consequently, pupils feel confident in most classes in seeking help when required, which contributes well to their progress and learning. Most teachers have effective classroom management, although ineffective teaching, where learning objectives are not clear and methods used are inappropriate, does lead to poor concentration and, sometimes, unacceptable behaviour, particularly in Year 9 within the larger lower sets in some subjects. In some of the best lessons, as, for example, in history, teachers use resources and strategies, which keep pupils involved, both individually and in pairs. In a GCSE lesson on the Cuban missile crisis, teachers used a range of sources, including video, to enable pupils to consider the crisis from the different viewpoints of the main protagonists, so enabling them to empathise better with political leaders facing difficult choices. Good use is made of computers in many subjects, as in mathematics, where pupils in Year 11 used a spreadsheet to calculate the median and mean of sets of data. A wide range of resources is used in foreign languages in lessons delivered with skill and enthusiasm, which result in pupils responding enthusiastically.

59. In most departments marking is satisfactory, although in many there is inconsistency between teachers. It is often supportive and encouraging but does not always indicate to pupils what they need to do to improve. It is best in English. In mathematics, pupils are given targets for future improvement and occasionally some good guidance on how to improve solutions. In art and design, work is marked with care and pupils are always informed of their present level of attainment and are set targets and areas for improvement. In history, teachers give clear indications of levels pupils have achieved and how they can progress to the next grade or level. Performance in physical education is assessed regularly in order to enhance teaching and learning. Marking is particularly effective in the new GNVQ course in ICT, where pupils are given clear advice on how to improve. However, in other ICT lessons, teachers do not use or record assessments to plan for the next stages of pupils' learning. Overall, the quality and use of ongoing assessment to inform both teachers and learners of the effectiveness of pupils' learning is satisfactory, as is pupils' own knowledge of their learning. However, too many pupils are unclear of the levels at which they are working. The planned development of tutors as learning managers should support pupils' understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and what they should do to make further progress.

60. Homework is usually set regularly, although the amount varies significantly between teachers and subjects. It is used effectively by most teachers to augment work carried out in class. A minority of parents expressed opposition to homework or thought too much was set. This is not the case. Although a minority of pupils choose to spend excessive time on their work, in general the time spent is, if anything, on the low side, with many pupils able to complete most of it without it impacting greatly on their other interests outside school. There is excellent provision in the library and through study centres to support those pupils who either require assistance with their work or a place to complete it quietly. Pupils make good use of these resources.

61. Teaching and learning for pupils who have special educational needs is very good in the Learning Support Provision. Teachers understand pupils' special needs very well and use the agreed targets to great advantage. Lessons are well structured so that pupils are interested and are able to concentrate very well. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils were seen sequencing the letters of the alphabet, and they were later fully engaged when the teacher asked them to re-order the class list in correct order. Often lessons are split into two halves so that pupils do class work for the first half, and use a special computer

programme for the second half. In Key Stage 4 Assisted Support Groups, the teachers ensure that material is as interesting as possible. For example, a Year 10 group were seen studying volcanoes and putting the order of events in proper sequence, reading, spelling, listening and writing. Later they are to work on the story of the Titanic. In one Year 7 lesson in languages, with pupils from the Dyslexia Provision, pupils made excellent progress in all four language skills as a result of skilful planning and excellent delivery.

62. Teachers mostly offer good support in lessons where there is no assistant, enabling pupils to make good progress, and planning work that is suitably pitched for their needs. When assistants are present, they also provide good, focused help. They are active in helping and they fully understand the problems that pupils encounter. However, even with a large number of assistants, it is not possible to provide help in all the lessons with such a large special needs register of pupils. Consequently, the quality of learning in some larger middle and lower sets, without support, is affected adversely by the ability of some teachers to manage such groups.

63. Teaching and learning in the Dyslexia Provision is also very good, and teachers demonstrate their expertise and patience very clearly. Much of the work requires frequent reinforcement as when a Year 8 group were seen working through fractions and decimals in order to be able to work out a probability scale exercise. The teacher plans to revisit this topic several times.

64. Almost all pupils come from a white UK heritage background. However, at the time of the inspection there were two pupils in school at an early stage of learning English and funding was also available to support a number of traveller children. Good support is provided to these pupils. For example, a boy who arrived earlier this term with no English language was provided with substantial one-to-one support in order to place him in a position to access the whole curriculum as soon as possible. He has made excellent progress. Appropriate support is also provided for a smaller number of children from traveller families.

Sixth Form

65. The overall standard of teaching in the Sixth Form is satisfactory in the way it supports student learning, and ensures that most make satisfactory or better progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills, and achieve appropriately. In the 46 lessons seen and the sample of other work observed, just over a half of teaching was good or better and teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory in only one lesson. However, only one lesson in nine was very good or excellent, which as a proportion is less than is normally found at Sixth Form Level. It was also significantly less strong than the teaching in Years 10 and 11 seen during the inspection. Even so, a feature of most Sixth Form teaching is the concern staff members have for students' progress and the good relationship between the teachers and students. For these reasons the great majority of students value the help and support they receive, even if on occasion, the teaching is less challenging than it could be.

66. A positive feature of the teaching is its inclusive nature. There are a number of students with special educational needs and some with physical disabilities. They are well integrated and set challenging work. Teachers make considerable efforts to involve them in class learning and provide individual support. On occasions, there is good use of learning support assistants. Overall, those students see themselves as a valued part of the Sixth Form and the teaching and support ensures that they make appropriate progress.

67. The best teaching is in vocational courses in health and social care and the A and AS Level courses in art and design and geography. The very good teaching in health and social care combines a number of strengths in subject knowledge, lesson planning and organisation that ensure pace and variety in the learning activities. This develops students' knowledge and skills and keeps them interested and involved. The main strengths in art and

design teaching are in textiles, painting, drawing and graphics, particularly in textiles where the clear lesson objectives, teacher support and wide variety of stimulating activities involve and, on occasion, inspire the students. The good teaching in geography is based mainly on strong subject knowledge. It is used effectively in well planned lessons that make good use of question and answer sessions that involve the students and develop their understanding.

68. All subject and course teaching is well informed and enables the students to make satisfactory or better progress in their knowledge and understanding. Teachers use their specialist knowledge in a variety of ways such as: providing clear expositions of complex ideas and theory in geography; making skilful use of question and answer sessions to develop learning points in English, leisure and recreation and health and social care; producing high quality learning materials in business and ICT; and well chosen learning and stimulus materials in art and design. All of these activities, in their different ways, help ensure that students have a greater insight and understanding of their chosen area.

69. Lessons in most subjects are soundly planned. The best teaching has clear learning outcomes that are shared with the students and uses a variety of whole class, individual and group activities that sustain good lesson pace. This was evident in a Year 12 health and social care lesson, where students benefited from a clear explanation of self-concept and were able to discuss the concept and apply it to their own child investigations. However, there are a number of lessons where there is insufficient variety, as in a travel and tourism lesson where there was an overlong teacher exposition with little student participation, or in an ICT key skills lesson where there was too little teacher intervention resulting in students working at too slow a pace. In a number of courses and subjects, teachers are required or choose to combine groups. In these situations, students from different years and course levels are being taught in the same lessons. This requires very effective lesson planning and class management if all students are to make the best possible progress. The art and design staff goes to considerable lengths to produce individualised learning programmes, though at the cost of some teaching strategies that use the whole group. Planning and good class management was also evident in a GNVQ/Advanced Vocational Level manufacturing lesson, where the teacher was able to keep the GNVQ intermediate group fully occupied in a prototype testing project, using a learning support assistant whilst supporting a Year 12 Advanced Vocational Level group in a graphics activity and overseeing the individual progress being made by the Year 13 student in his final modelling project. Not all lessons are as well planned and where this is the case, the pace of learning is slower.

70. There are some good examples of teaching that contributes to students developing more independent learning skills, though the best practice is not shared across all subject and course areas. The vocational courses tend to be stronger in this respect, often because of the higher proportion of assessed assignment work using vocational contexts and greater use of ICT. In business, the students use ICT to analyse spreadsheet data and devise presentations using computer and digital projectors. The business staff also supports the development of students' research skills through the setting up of an Intranet site. All of the vocational courses use the students' work placements or special events to develop planning and research skills. Personal social and health education (PSHE) tutors also utilise those experiences to help students strengthen and record wider skills, such as problem solving and working with others. Leisure and tourism teachers, for example, used the organisation of a Year 7 visit as a vehicle for students to learn about event management. However, the focus on developing independent learning skills is uneven between courses and even within those courses. Leisure courses contain examples where students are too teacher directed in their learning though generally, the weaker practice is in the GCE A and AS Level courses. ICT, English and geography all place insufficient emphasis on developing students wider reading and research skills.

71. The teaching of the three main key skills of communication, application of number and ICT is generally satisfactory. All students benefit from discretely taught lessons by specialists and are therefore able to cope better with the recently introduced and more

challenging external tests. The vocational courses provide opportunities to develop the key skills, particularly ICT, which is well utilised for assignment work mainly using word processing and spreadsheets for presentation. Manufacturing utilises computer-aided design and some computer-aided manufacture, while business activities require the use of spreadsheets for financial forecasting. Application of number is much less a feature of teaching in most courses other than in business, manufacturing and art photography where it is used for measuring and estimating. There is little conscious development of key skills in the non-vocational course areas and, across all courses, staff have not sufficiently sign posted opportunities for students to develop evidence for key skills assessment.

72. Students are positive about the marking and assessment of their work, although are not necessarily aware of exactly how well they are progressing in terms of the current standards being achieved. In most subjects and courses, marking is satisfactory and it is usually regular and constructive. The better practice is seen in health and social care and business, where the teachers set out clearly the standards required through the use of the assessment criteria and illustrative examples so helping students know how well they are doing. In a number of other subjects and courses this is less well developed, such as, ICT, geography, English and leisure. In English the marking does not adequately reflect that of the external examination so students do not fully understand how they can improve their work in line with the examination requirements.

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

73. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. Provision of the statutory curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7-9, but as time allocated to religious education is lower than recommended the local Agreed Syllabus is not being covered in the necessary depth. Provision for the statutory curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. Design and technology is not taken by all pupils and, therefore, as at the time of the last inspection, statutory requirements are not being met. The delivery of ICT across the curriculum is not comprehensive and not all pupils are appropriately assessed by the end of Year 11. Those pupils who are not covering the full requirements of the National Curriculum at Key stage 4 are not disapplied from the National Curriculum as is required.

74. The taught timetable of 24 hours and 35 minutes is less than the average 25 hours taught in most schools although it satisfies minimum recommendations. One period a day is shorter than others. No time is allowed for travelling between lessons on this large site, although time is allowed at the end of registrations and there is a warning bell before the end of break. As a consequence, through no fault of the pupils, many lessons begin late. Thus the actual taught week is generally significantly less than recommended. As most pupils enter the school in Year 7 with much lower than average standards of attainment, this lower than average taught time is unacceptable, although it is augmented well by extra-curricular opportunities and study centres for those who wish to participate in them.

75. Pupils are taught in a variety of ability and mixed ability groups according to the subject. One class of the highest attaining pupils are taught as a grammar stream for most subjects, from part of the way through Year 7 to Year 11. The decision to include pupils in this stream is taken based on results in cognitive tests and National Curriculum assessments, reading ages and their performance over the first few weeks of term. From Year 8, an Alpha stream is introduced, based on pupils' potential and their performance in Year 7. At Key Stage 3, other pupils are set by prior attainment in English, mathematics, science, French, geography and history and at Key Stage 4 in English, mathematics and science and in options, where possible. These arrangements impact on timetabling and do not always group pupils most effectively for achieving good learning and the highest standards. Whilst parents of pupils in the grammar and alpha streams are positive about the arrangements, some pupils hold more varied views recognising both the strengths and

shortcomings of the current arrangements.

76. At Key Stage 3, art and design and technology subjects are grouped together and pupils have two periods per week for a term and a half before moving on to the next subject. The departments claim that they can fulfil the requirements of National Curriculum through this arrangement. Whilst this appears to be the case with art and design, it is not currently the case in design and technology where links between different materials within the subject are not made. In languages, pupils in Year 7 have a higher allocation of time to French than is usual. However, some pupils of lower attainment have one lesson less to use 'Successmaker' to support their literacy. Drama is only introduced as a discrete subject from Year 8. Timetabling arrangements for physical education, where some pupils are in different groups for each lesson, make delivery of the full curriculum difficult, especially at Key Stage 3.

77. At Key Stage 4, the art and design department offer a wide variety of options, which include textiles, photography, drawing and painting, graphics and ceramics. This wide choice ensures a good take-up from pupils. A good range of other option subjects are offered at Key Stage 4, including part one GNVQs. All pupils in Key Stage 4 have one compulsory French or Spanish lesson, which leads to the school's Certificate of Achievement or a short course GCSE. Those who choose French or Spanish as an option have an additional three periods. The time allocation to science at Key Stage 4, whether pupils take double or single science, is excessive, whilst that for English is also higher than average. Consequently, the established expectation is that all pupils sit eight GCSE subjects unless it is not in their interests to do so. This is lower than usual, although half-GCSEs in languages and religious education are now being taken by some pupils, although not in physical education. The school plans to increase the number of GCSEs taken from 2003. This will benefit most pupils, particularly the higher attainers who are currently more limited in their option choice.

78. There is very good provision for pupils' literacy development throughout the school. It is very well managed, and progress is being monitored termly across ten subjects. Provision is recent, and monitoring and evaluation are not yet secure. All subjects have literacy policies, which inform their approach to teaching and learning. Literacy booklets of high quality support learning. There have been two recent whole school training days devoted to the subject. Writing frames can now be obtained from the school ICT network. Stickers to remind pupils to punctuate their work have been issued to all teachers. There is a literacy guide for parents and carers and 'Handy hints for helpers' and 'Tips for parents' are booklets, which promote home and school links and improve standards. There is a home/school spelling project based on well founded principles. Similar developments in numeracy are at an earlier stage of development.

79. In general, pupils who have special educational needs are included very well into all areas of the curriculum that the school offers. Some are withdrawn for extra help across a range of provision, such as that for dyslexia, or the learning support help that is offered. Some have support within their own lessons, either with a support assistant or from the teacher. Pupils who have physical disabilities are fully integrated into all classes and where access may be difficult, the classroom is changed to accommodate their ease of entry. Activities that take place out of school time are open to everyone, but there are some available in the Learning Support rooms such as homework club, movie club and the drop-in sessions available in Dyslexia and Learning Support rooms. Pupils appreciate these

times, and relationships between staff and pupils are enhanced well by them. Individual education plans enable teachers and assistants to help pupils focus on areas for development in their work, which in turn leads to generally satisfactory progress across all the subjects. Teachers make good provision of work appropriately related to pupils' needs.

80. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily and in many aspects very well. The policy document referring to this aspect is good. It reflects many aspects of the school's life, especially the inclusion of all pupils and staff into the community that makes up the whole school. More focused detail is included about pupils who have physical disabilities, and other special educational needs, and integration of these pupils into the school and its day-to-day life is exemplary. The policy addresses issues of ethnicity, gender, and beliefs, as well as cultural diversity. The performances of boys and girls are analysed carefully and the school realises that there is often a difference in their results and grades. In order to try to address this, in-service training has been arranged for all staff, with speakers who are experts in this field. Opportunities for both staff and pupils are founded upon equality of access and the school takes these matters seriously. For example, staff development opportunities are prioritised, and everyone has a chance to make their proposals. However, current grouping arrangements impact on the equality of access to the curriculum for all pupils. For example, some of the highest attaining pupils in some subjects are not in the highest sets in those subjects. In some subjects, there are some large lower sets taught without appropriate support. In contrast, in some subjects, pupils of more limited attainment are motivated to achieve well by mixing with higher attaining pupils. Whilst mixed ability grouping is not appropriate for all subjects, current grouping arrangements are too inflexible.

81. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. The programme is very effectively co-ordinated. Progression and continuity are ensured by regular meetings between the co-ordinator, key stage managers and heads of year. It is taught by all form tutors, who also meet regularly to review the success of the various units of work. However, pupils are not consistently involved in this review process. Pupils are taught a full range of personal and social skills and study many contemporary issues including those relating to drugs education and sex education and there is an appropriate emphasis on careers guidance. The quality of the teaching of the programme throughout the whole school varies, but is often good. Teachers plan well and have high expectations. They employ a range of resources, which motivate and inform pupils, as seen for example in a Year 7 lesson on preparing pupils for elections to the school council and in both Year 9 and Year 11 lessons on study skills.

82. The provision for careers education is very good. Careers education and guidance benefit from very good links with the local Careers Service and employers and are supported by a very good careers resource area based in the library. Access to this resource is good during lessons and it is staffed by the head of careers and Year 11 pupils at lunchtimes and after school. Pupils are able to gather careers information on the Internet. The school regularly wins a careers library grant from the local authority. The careers curriculum is well delivered within the PSHE programme. Schemes of work of work are comprehensive and training is arranged for staff teaching the careers modules. There are elements of careers education in Years 7 and 8 and in Year 9 pupils draw up a Careers Action Plan, which is analysed and amended if appropriate as they progress through Key Stage 4. There are good procedures for organising careers interviews. A careers consultant from the Kent Careers Service is based in the school for two days a week. All pupils with special educational needs are interviewed individually with their parents and all other pupils are interviewed in groups of three or four. Careers advice is also made available to parents on parents' evenings.

83. Provision for work experience is very good. All pupils in Year 10 do a one-week placement. The school has very good links with the Kent and Medway Education Business Alliance and has been awarded the Quality Work Experience Award in recognition of its high

standards in this area of the curriculum. Work experience is very well prepared in collaboration with local employers and the progress of pupils during their placements is carefully monitored. Reports from employers are complimentary about pupils, commenting on the good preparation and attitude of pupils. Last year the school won the Kent Schools Business Challenge.

84. The last inspection reported that the wide range of extracurricular provision was a strength of the school. This continues to be the case. The school provides a large number of subject based clubs and other activities in which pupils can participate as part of the school day. There is a lively Christian club, which meets every week, and retreats for pupils are organised as part of its programme of activities. The extracurricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The Dyslexia Provision runs a 'drop in' at lunchtime, homework clubs and general support. There are also 'Successmaker' sessions, which are well supported by pupils.

85. Computer rooms are made available for GCSE homework during the lunch hour and pupils are also able to take advantage of the computers in the library at lunchtimes as well as after school. Visits to the theatre are organised on a regular basis and public performances and concerts are undertaken by the music and drama departments. Visits to France are a feature of the modern foreign languages department and pupils are able to make bread in the local bakery in Le Touquet. The French and geography departments combine on visits to Boulogne and the history department joins with the language department to visit the trenches on the Somme. However, other geography and history visits are less frequent than is usual. Nearer home, a one-day bike ride for fifty pupils from different years is organised annually in East Sussex. To take advantage of the school farm, the science department has both a farm club and a Young Farmers club. Revision sessions are held on Saturday mornings in a wide range of subjects for Years 7,9 and 11 and are well attended, as are the summer literacy and numeracy schools, which are organised during the long holiday for some prospective Year 7 pupils. There is a very good study support provision for both key stages, which is available nightly after school.

86. The school has a good range of community links which enhances the curriculum for many pupils and makes a significant contribution to their personal development. The well established school farm is an excellent resource and involves many pupils from all ages, often working in their free time after school and weekends. The school greatly appreciates the interest and input of the local farming community who give willingly of time, resources and expertise. The school acknowledges that their support enables the farm to keep operating in the effective way it does and gives pupils the opportunity to develop their interest. The school regularly exhibits at the Kent County Show and are habitual winners. With the Education Business Alliance the school has many valuable friendships with local employers and businesses. The Kent Schools Business Challenge for Sixth Formers involves students in preparing an actual marketing brief for a local company. This directly links with the work in school and once again, students have been very successful in recent years. Involvement with local community groups is helping increase pupils' awareness of the need to help others. For example, pupils have given concerts for the Salvation Army and the Over Sixties Club, and worked extremely hard to raise money for local charities and organisations, particularly Demelza House, a local children's hospice. A school open day this year saw over 1000 visitors touring the school, indicating the high regard in which the school is held. The school has good links with its main feeder primary schools. Whilst these mostly relate to secondary transfer, there are some good curricular links, such as that with languages where Sixth Form students teach some French in primary schools. Links with other establishments of further education are less well developed, although there are good links with some colleges of higher education, including an art college and Christ Church College, Canterbury.

87. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. There is a whole school audit of the place of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within subjects which highlights a number of areas where the spiritual dimension can contribute to pupils' learning in the subject. However, there is no policy document, and guidance on this aspect of pupils' development within the quality assurance documentation, is not consistently followed by all subjects in providing opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness through lessons. Where it is promoted well in personal, social education, religious education and in aspects of English, pupils respond with interest and empathy. In a Year 11 religious education lesson several pupils reflected in a mature way on the part that one's own beliefs and values can play in dealing positively with personal suffering. Although not consistently promoted through year group assemblies or the tutor group thought for the day, the spiritual dimension to human experience was well promoted in one Year 8 assembly, for example, that reflected on the need for, and importance of, remembrance for those who have died in war. In contrast a Year 9 assembly on a similar theme did not encourage the same depth of awareness or empathy and an opportunity to promote spiritual reflection was missed. Not all tutors follow up the 'thought for the day' and the school does not fully comply with the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship, although this has improved since the last inspection. Although inconsistent, the school does successfully promote a broader spiritual awareness through the religious education, art and music curriculum, its work with charities and through the activities of the school farm, where pupils experience the wonder of animal life.

88. Provision for moral development is good in the school. There are many opportunities within subjects for pupils to confront moral dilemmas that face individuals, societies and world leaders. In English, geography, history, religious education, and personal and social education pupils regularly discuss the moral implications of actions taken by governments, individuals and friends. Year 10 pupils, in a geography lesson, examined the differing arguments for the cause of the flooding of the Mississippi river and discussed the ethical implications of decision-making by experts and the effect the decision had on the lives of those living around the Mississippi. Lessons in the personal and social education programme allow pupils to discuss the importance of taking responsibility for their own actions, and are contributing effectively to pupils' understanding of the moral and ethical dimension to human living. The school has effective systems to promote the moral well being of all pupils, including an opportunity for older pupils to be prefects. These pupils learn to exercise responsibility in a just and fair way. Pupils follow a well-understood code of conduct in class and around the school. Moral awareness and issues of morality are well promoted in assemblies.

89. The school makes very good provision for the social development of pupils. Relationships throughout the school are very good, between pupils themselves and between staff and pupils. Movement around the school is good-natured and pupils are friendly and courteous towards visitors. The year councils offer pupils the chance to take on responsibility and contribute to the day-to-day running of the school. For example, pupils were very involved in changes to the format of their diary/planner and in the refurbishments of the dining halls. Pupils feel their opinions are listened to and that they can make an effective difference to school life. Pupils are encouraged and given the opportunity to organise and run many fund-raising events for charities, near and far. They do this with genuine interest and compassion. The personal, social and health education programme promotes responsible attitudes to and good awareness of the problems associated with growing up and life in general. The careers guidance and work experience placements give pupils the chance to consider their own future and encourages them to look beyond their immediate neighbourhood. In many lessons, pupils are encouraged to work in groups or pairs and they do this well and productively. The staff has high expectations of behaviour and co-operation and pupils respond accordingly. The quality of the provision for moral and social education is at the heart of the school's success in helping pupils to become responsible young people.

90. Overall, the provision for the cultural development of pupils is unsatisfactory. There are too few opportunities to extend pupils' awareness and understanding of the diverse ethnic culture that makes up Britain today and to broaden pupils' experience beyond their immediate environment. There are, however, areas of considerable strength, such as the range of extra-curricular activities in music. Many pupils across the school take part in choirs, orchestras, musical groups and performances and many pupils are learning to play an instrument. In modern languages, pupils have e-mailed penfriends in France and have visited each other. Some Year 10 French pupils were offered work experience placements in France. Within the curriculum there are some opportunities to look at the life of people from different cultures, such as those in dance, art and drama, but overall it is not well developed. Generally, pupils are given little insight into the opportunities and challenges involved in living in a multi-cultural society. This was reported in the last inspection and the school has not made satisfactory improvement since then.

Sixth Form

91. The school has a smaller than average Sixth Form. However, it provides a good range of courses and subjects that meets the interests and needs of many of its students. Around 30 to 40 per cent of Year 11 pupils continue into the Sixth Form and these take full programmes of study that combine in each case, vocational and academic courses. There are well-established courses in business, ICT, health and social care, leisure and tourism, manufacturing and art and design, all leading to the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE). All of the courses can be taken at intermediate or Foundation Level, if appropriate, as part of a one year course. An increasing feature of provision is the development of GCE A Level and AS Level courses that complement students' vocational courses. Students in the Sixth Form who have special educational needs are cared for well. Adult help is available, both for academic and physical problems should they arise. The school successfully operates an inclusion policy whereby all students have equal access to the curriculum and to all activities in which they wish to participate. The school accepts that many of the courses are challenging, though believes that personal development of some students is valuable even if the qualifications are not always gained. In a number of courses there are combined classes and this helps maintain increasing breadth though on occasions these arrangements limit the range of teaching and learning possible.

92. The school makes good provision for the key skills of ICT, communication and application of number through timetabled lessons for all students that help them prepare for the external tests. Less developed, however, are the efforts to signpost opportunities for coursework development and assessment within some of the vocational and other courses. All students benefit from two weeks work placement in each year that provides useful practical contexts for their vocational studies, important in an area where other school/industry links are more difficult to establish. Preparation for higher education is thorough and includes regular links with local universities and colleges. Another positive feature is the opportunity to pursue other key skills, such as working with others and problem solving.

93. Another good feature of the Sixth Form curriculum is that all students take a well-organised PSHE course, that includes careers education and guidance as well as a religious education programme that follows the local education authority scheme and meets the statutory requirement. Personal social and health education (PSHE) also addresses many of the areas identified as part of citizenship and makes a worthwhile contribution to moral and social education. In an otherwise very full student programme, the school does not have a timetabled programme of sport and recreational activities though opportunities do exist in a number of forms. These include driving preparation within PSHE, courses in sports studies and sports leader qualifications, as well as a range of extra-curricular

activities within the music and arts areas. There is a strong sense of community responsibility with students running their Sixth Form council as well as sitting on the youth council in the local area. Many are involved in supporting younger pupils as mentors and a number work with local primary schools in teaching French.

94. Overall, the school ensures all students have very full learning programmes with limited private study time. Students actually appreciate being fully involved though at times the workload of some students is heavy.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

95. Overall, the school provides a good level of care and support for its pupils, which is recognised and appreciated by parents.

96. The support for pupils' personal development is very good and a real strength of the school. The pastoral system of heads of year and tutors play a central role in making this so positive. Year 7 tutors create a secure and caring environment in which young pupils settle quickly. After Year 7, tutors and pupils mostly stay together for the next two years, with another tutor taking over for Years 10 and 11. They have tutor time, assemblies and a personal, social and health education lesson together each week. This gives plenty of opportunity to build stable and effective relationships. Teachers and tutors know pupils well individually and have a genuine concern for their progress, welfare and personal well being. Communication between them is very good at all levels. The quality of the relationships is the basis upon which much of the personal support is built, and this contributes to pupils' confidence and attitude to school. Pupils have trust and confidence in their teachers and find them approachable, responsive and encouraging. The school is a happy place and most pupils enjoy being there.

97. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress is less well developed but improving. Recent training has focused on the changing role of the tutor and is giving them a more active role in closely monitoring the on-going academic progress of pupils. The newly appointed key stage managers are giving clear direction on this and working towards a closer analysis of the tracking sheets and abundance of assessment data to highlight pupils requiring extra support. Tutors now receive much more information to give them a clearer picture of pupils' attainment. As yet the role of the head of year in this process is less clear. They have played a pivotal role in the strong system of pastoral care in the school, but senior managers recognise that they need to clarify and develop the role of the year head to play an equally effective role in academic monitoring.

98. Across the school, there are good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. In some subjects, good marking is complemented by a range of strategies to enable further comprehensive assessment to take place. For example, there are regular end of unit assessments in some subjects, such as history and geography. In many subjects, portfolios of moderated work are put together as exemplars. Assessment is particularly thorough in modern foreign languages. In addition, the school has a coherent and detailed system for collecting information on pupils' academic progress from before they join the school until they leave, and this information is now passed on to tutors, teachers and heads of department to enable them to track pupils' progress. The senior management team regularly monitors assessment within departments.

99. The use of assessment information is satisfactory. The extensive information collected on pupils is used to predict future performance and to identify potential underachievers. As a result some of these pupils are given mentors to help them make

progress. However, the targets which are set for individual pupils in reports are frequently too general to be a really effective means of aiding progress, and the strategy of using assessment data to set effective targets for improvement, whilst developing, is still in its relatively early stages.

100. The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. Daily and weekly checking of registers enables quick follow up of absences and provides tutor groups with information on their weekly attendance. There is friendly rivalry, particularly amongst the younger year groups, for the tutor group with the best attendance each week, which, together with prizes and certificates for individuals, keeps good attendance in the minds of pupils. The school's commitment to the promotion of attendance is evident through their employment of an attendance clerk to follow up absences and contact home, the good relationship with the education welfare service and the constant setting of challenging targets for individuals, tutor groups, year groups and the school as a whole.

101. The school has good systems and procedures for encouraging and maintaining good discipline and behaviour based on a climate of trust, respect and tolerance towards others. These values permeate the school day and pupils respond to the high standards expected of them. The merits and sanctions are clearly understood by pupils, and felt to be effective in maintaining good behaviour and attitudes. Staff members show a lot of respect for their pupils and for each other which contributes strongly towards the calm and friendly atmosphere within the school. Positive messages are displayed all around school to encourage pupils to think about and consider all aspects of learning and attitudes towards life in general. The personal, social and health education programme considers the cause and effect of bullying and older pupils trained in peer counselling provide support and a helpful ear. There is very good specialist provision to help pupils manage their own behaviour and records show the lengths the school goes to in trying a whole host of strategies to prevent pupils from being excluded.

102. The physical welfare of pupils is given high priority overall. There is an effective child protection policy, which follows the local authority procedures and good use is made of outside agencies with clear lines of communication. A full time welfare assistant provides very good care for sick and injured pupils and good use is made of the expertise of the school nurse who plays an important role in the health and sex education modules of the personal, social and health education programme. There is a good approach towards health and safety monitoring across the whole site and within departments and there are regular checks on fire and electrical equipment. A small number of minor health and safety issues were raised with departments during the inspection. Whilst the school's concern for the welfare of its pupils is good, there are a few areas where it could be improved. For example, the practice of all pupils (including Years 10 and 11) sitting on the floor during some assemblies is unacceptable. Pupils, and some parents, raised other issues, including the lack of lockers for pupils to store books, pupils being unable to shower at the end of some physical education lessons, the condition of some of the girls' toilets and the cramped and sometimes unreliable bus and coach service. The school has a member of staff responsible for transport liaison although buses are not the school's responsibility. Rather than provide lockers, a massive undertaking in a large school, successful strategies have been adopted which reduce the amount of work that pupils have to carry each day. The school has a refurbishment programme which will address girls' concerns about their toilets.

103. Pupils who have special educational needs are well cared for. They are identified before they leave their primary schools, and their records are passed on to this school. Assessment is an ongoing process and there are tests in Year 7 and again in later years when necessary. The results of these tests help to form appropriate targets for individual educational plans, although teachers also assess their needs as the school year

progresses. These targets are set by the relevant subject teachers and tutors for literacy, numeracy and for behaviour improvement. Lunchtime sessions for homework, social activities, and general support are offered in the Learning Support rooms, and the co-ordinator has a library of entertaining videotapes for this purpose.

104. The Dyslexia Provision also provides good opportunities at lunchtime and after school for social activities and study help. Pupils in the Pupils Support Provision have their own break and lunchtime programmes, which are part of the overall system created for their inclusion and return to mainstream classes. Pupils who have physical disabilities are able to go to their own room if they need extra help at lunchtime, and there is a team of adults on hand to offer help and support.

Sixth Form

Assessment

105. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory though there is some variation in quality between different courses and subjects. In the vocational courses the staff make use of the explicit assessment criteria for assignments and students usually have a clearer idea of the requirements. This is evident, for example, in a vocational Advanced Level manufacturing lesson where a Year 13 student had used the Internet to gain access to awarding body exemplars for specific coursework. Similar exemplars were well used in a health and social care lesson where, as a learning activity, students matched the exemplars to the grade criteria. This aspect of assessment is less strong in some other subjects, such as English and geography, where the marking is constructive with detailed comments but does not sufficiently inform students about examination requirements.

106. The school has detailed information about students' prior attainment at Key Stage 3 and GCSE as well as cognitive ability test data for the main skills areas. These have been used constructively to derive a less rigorous guide to likely outcomes on the Sixth Form courses. The school has now just started to use one of the widely recognised predictive measures, though the first assessments have yet to be completed. At present, the process of identifying target grades for students in the different courses and subjects and introducing a process of target setting, has yet to be established. Current student tracking procedures are strong in identifying and remedying unsatisfactory attitudes and effort. In some courses the students are clearly aware of their targets and what they need to do to reach them. However, with the increased mix of courses, the overall assessment of current attainment and progress is less secure and the school has yet to fully establish the form tutor as central to the academic monitoring process.

Advice, support and guidance

107. Initial guidance on entry to the Sixth Form is greatly valued by the students and in terms of their main course, they feel they received constructive and informed help and made the right choices. Where students have particular learning needs and want to continue their personal and educational development, the school is supportive and identifies learning targets while ensuring students and parents are realistic about qualification outcomes. Outside agencies are used fully to provide help and reports when it is time to review statements of educational need. Parents are kept well informed, and attend annual reviews. As students with special educational needs progress through this upper part of the school they increase in independence appropriately but help and support is there should it be needed. All students are very positive about the Sixth Form and feel able to get support about any personal or learning problems should these arise. Most tutors know their students well and have regular contact with them through tutor time and the PSHE lessons. Tutors

provide careers education and preparation for work experience and help students work through structured materials that inform them about further education and employment. This is important given that the majority of students will follow those routes. An increasing number of students considering higher education benefit from the specialist advice and support of the deputy director of Sixth Form studies, who helps them complete their personal statements and writes the references. With all students pursuing a vocational course as the major part of their programme, the vocational teachers or the director of Sixth Form studies are still regarded by many students as the first contact for help and support. However, given the increasing mix of courses the school recognises the need to strengthen the role of the tutor for both academic and pastoral monitoring and support.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

108. The school has maintained the positive relationship with parents reported in the last inspection and is constantly looking for ways to improve further.

109. Most parents continue to hold the school in high regard, as they did in the last inspection and have predominantly positive views about the school. They are particularly pleased that the school expects their children to work hard and feel children make good progress. Parents appreciate the quality of teaching and think the school is well led and managed. Their children enjoy being at school and parents generally feel comfortable approaching staff with problems. Parents are less pleased with the amount of homework given, saying they think it is too much. Some parents feel they are not sufficiently informed about their child's progress.

110. The school genuinely feels that an effective partnership with parents is an essential component of a successful school and works very hard to involve parents in as many ways as possible. Parents receive a lot of information about the school, its philosophy, approach, daily routines and successes, all of which is of a very high quality. In particular, at the beginning of Year 7, parents receive a file containing an interesting and practical range of information to help them understand what goes on at school, what their children will be doing and how parents can help in a constructive way at home. For example, the leaflet on literacy actively enables parents to contribute towards improving literacy through practical suggestions of activities and books to read at home. The file also includes information on the resources and facilities in school and information on how to read the tracking sheets. Parents are encouraged to use the file to collate all tracking sheets and reports over the years to build up a cumulative record of the child's progress. The headteacher provides very thorough newsletters for parents on a regular basis, although these and some of the other documents provided for them are very formal in layout and would benefit from a more attractive, informal approach, which catches the attention of the reader.

111. Formal reporting of progress to parents is through two tracking sheets, a written report and at least one consultation evening each year. Parents report they find the consultation evenings useful and attendance at these has improved in recent years to over 70 per cent. The tracking sheets are a step towards providing an on-going check on the achievement of pupils but need to give parents a clearer indication of how well pupils are doing in comparison to both their own potential and national expectations. The quality of the comments in the fuller written reports varies greatly. On a few occasions, comments show clearly what pupils can and cannot do in a subject, relate this performance to a National Curriculum Level or GCSE grade and suggest targets, which will help pupils to improve. This is not standard practice, however, and the majority of the comments are too general and fail to provide a clear picture of actual attainment and how to improve. This contributes to why some parents feel they are not sufficiently informed regarding pupils' progress.

112. The verbal and informal communication between home and school is very good. Staff telephone parents readily to discuss minor and serious issues to try to resolve them as

quickly as possible. Similarly, parents ring the school often and their concerns are dealt with quickly. Information evenings for each year group also provide parents with details specific to their child. Parents views are sought either by questionnaire, by letter or via the Friends of Westlands Association. Their views are held in high regard by the school and often have a bearing on some issues. The Friends of Westlands Association is also an integral part of the school, providing parents with a practical way of helping the school and also acting as a barometer of parental views for the school. Parents are now being asked to take a more active interest in monitoring pupils' work through signing the planner, and acknowledging merits and notes of praise. During the summer literacy and numeracy schools, pupils, teachers and parents completed a daily diary recording their views and opinions.

113. All parents of pupils who have statements of special educational needs are invited to attend annual reviews, and parents' views are sought and recorded for these meetings, as are those of the pupils concerned. The quality of information for parents from the special needs department is generally good, and they are informed of pupils' targets and progress. There are consultation evenings where teachers and parents can meet and talk about the provision for these children. The staff of the dyslexia provision are very often in telephone contact with parents and there are opportunities for personal contact should questions or issues arise. Parents of pupils in the Pupils Support Provision are kept fully informed from an early stage and throughout the placement so that they know exactly how a pupil is faring. Parents of those pupils who have physical disabilities keep in close touch, especially when medical reports and provision are reviewed. They attend annual reviews and are appreciative of the help and support given to pupils.

114. All such links with parents are having a positive effect on the school as a whole and on the learning of pupils. The perception of the school within the community has dramatically improved, helped also by the good relationship with local newspapers, who regularly feature the school and pupils, giving their achievements the public recognition they deserve. The school is now vastly over-subscribed each year and parents are keen to praise the school as can be seen by the good return rate for the pre-inspection questionnaire.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

115. At the time of the last inspection, the then head was said to provide strong leadership. Whole school planning was described as good, supported by long term strategic financial planning. Leadership within subjects was said to vary, but with daily management generally sound. A key issue was identified, to review responsibilities and roles within the senior management team in order to facilitate curriculum planning. Two other key issues related to management of the curriculum. These were to develop a whole school curriculum policy and to create a broad and balanced curriculum at Key Stage 4. A further key issue directly related to management, in ensuring that all statutory requirements were met.

116. Overall, the quality of leadership and management in the school has improved since the last inspection and is now good. It is a strength of the school and in many aspects it is very good. The current headteacher was appointed three years ago, after a period as acting head, and nearly two years after the previous inspection. He has taught at the school for 31 years and was previously the deputy with, amongst other things, responsibility for financial management. His long association with the school places him in a unique position. His commitment to the school is transparent, having also educated his daughter at the school. He has a clear vision for the school, shared by staff and governors, to make the school the best secondary modern school in Kent. He has an open style of management. His door is open to any member of the school community and he, and his senior staff, are always around the school both formally and informally monitoring what is happening. The head describes his style as one of delegation, but openly admits that he finds this difficult to do. He is seen by colleagues and governors to have grown into the role of head, having been a predominantly administrative deputy. He is strongly focused on people and aware of pupils'

rights. He effectively used the vacancy at deputy level that arose with his promotion to start a thorough review of the roles and responsibilities of senior managers, which is now beginning to move into changes at middle management and other levels. Supported by the governors and deputies, he has very effectively identified strengths within the school's management and areas that need development.

117. There is now a clear and effective management structure. A deputy with responsibility for pupil attainment was appointed to complement the skills of the other deputy who has responsibility for pupil management. The expertise of both deputies is used effectively, but without creating an academic/ pastoral divide. Both deputies and other senior managers have quality assurance responsibilities for a number of curriculum areas. Three assistant heads have been appointed as key stage managers. One, the director of the Sixth Form, has long experience in the school, but the other two are recent appointments who, like the newest deputy, have been appointed for the particular experience and skills that they will bring to the roles which match areas for development identified by governors. The key stage managers, as well as undertaking quality assurance of curriculum areas, are responsible for tracking the academic progress of pupils and supporting pastoral staff in their key stage. The senior management also includes one curriculum co-ordinator. Two senior managers have successfully undertaken training for prospective heads. An executive officer has also been appointed to take over the financial management of the school, an area previously led by the head when he was deputy. The impact of the new leadership team is apparent within the school. There is a clear structure of line management. The deputy, responsible for pupil attainment produces a comprehensive set of data on pupils, which is shared with all staff and provides thorough analyses of examination results. These are now being used to effectively set aspirational targets both for subject areas and individual pupils. Key stage managers have started to analyse tracking sheets on year groups and identify pupils who deserve praise, and those who require additional support or sanctions. This is now being shared with form tutors, but their role as learning managers is only at an early stage of development. As yet the role of heads of year has changed little, but they are aware that they need to develop a greater role in academic monitoring alongside their tutors, whilst transferring some of their pastoral work onto both tutors and heads of department.

118. The school has clear aims and values. There are clear sets of objectives, which indicate how the school strives to meet each aim. Some of these occur in a slightly different format, indicating what is expected of parents and pupils to help support meeting the aims. The mission statement, 'Working together to succeed' is prominently displayed around the school and pupils, of all ages, can quote it and know that the school cares about them doing their best and succeeding. The aims are centred on raising achievement, whilst caring about the individual within a supportive school community. The aims stress the importance the school places on traditional values. These values are about the respect for individuals and behaviour and relationships that are essential for the orderly management of a large school community. The school's aims are supported by an extensive range of policy documents which are regularly reviewed. A member of senior management is responsible for monitoring the implementation of each policy and leading on its review. Almost all current policies have either been adopted or reviewed during the last two years. They range in size and detail. Only a few, such as those related to behaviour, are translated into versions appropriate for pupils or parents. For example, the code for pupil behaviour is shared effectively in the pupils' diary and information to parents. All policies can be seen by parents, but they are not provided with versions of most. Staff members

are provided with a comprehensive handbook. It includes all the information expected to support the smooth running of a school. The school's administration is very strong, although a few staff are daunted by the mass of paper that is available, which is not always presented in the most user-friendly manner.

119. The school's process of development planning is very good. There is an extensive, very detailed and appropriate whole school improvement plan, which runs for an academic year. However, the main areas of development, which centre around raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning, are ongoing as part of a longer term strategic plan. This enables the plan to link in effectively with financial planning and, therefore, the improvement plan is appropriately costed. Monitoring of the implementation of the plan is carried out rigorously. Senior managers regularly address progress on different aspects as part of their weekly management meetings. However, success criteria tend to refer to the completion of individual actions rather than measuring success against each area of the plan. Planning for the refurbishment and new build within the school has been handled very effectively, with the school identifying resources well in advance to carry out each project. The governors are fully involved in both the production and monitoring of the plan and receive regular reports at meetings. They have also received regular and detailed reports on progress in meeting the targets in the action plan produced after the last school inspection. However, despite the detailed monitoring, the school has made unsatisfactory progress in addressing two of the key issues in the last report; those related to multi-cultural education and to meeting statutory requirements in the teaching of design and technology. The school improvement plan is supplemented by extensive departmental plans which work to the same priorities.

120. There is a well-planned school calendar, shared with staff at the beginning of the school year. There is a regular cycle of meetings. The staff speaks of these as being effective and senior managers indicate that curriculum and pastoral team meetings are excellent forums for discussion. A senior management team meeting observed during the inspection was an example of very good practice. There was a clear agenda, with the minute taker checking on progress on action points from previous meetings, diaries checked, and appropriate issues discussed in a relaxed manner with all senior managers fully involved.

121. The school has introduced an impressive quality assurance system for monitoring and evaluating its performance throughout the year. Senior managers act as quality assurance managers for a number of curriculum areas each. Each area is monitored rigorously during a quality assurance fortnight and detailed reports are written. Curriculum co-ordinators meet regularly with their managers, who monitor the implementation of school policies in each area. The system is exemplary, as is the quality of information provided to subject teachers and form tutors on pupils' levels of attainment. Key stage managers monitor tracking sheets and curriculum co-ordinators are expected to monitor practice within their subjects. As yet, the quality of the latter is more varied. Whilst the role of senior managers is impressive, middle managers, both heads of years and departments and curriculum co-ordinators, have not been consistently empowered to take on greater responsibility for their own monitoring. Good use is made of external advisors to support monitoring. The quality assurance system has been effectively linked to performance management and to staff development.

122. The governing body is very committed and hard working and gives strong support to the school, whilst asking appropriate questions. It has a sensible approach to monitoring the performance and supporting the development of the school, questioning when unsure but using effectively the expertise of school staff. Governors are kept well informed by the school and have an effective committee structure. As a consequence, governors are able to carry out their strategic role successfully. For example, the curriculum committee receives all quality assurance reports as well as detailed reports on the school's performance in external assessments, whilst the finance committee monitors expenditure as well as scrutinising budget decisions. Part of a full governing body meeting was observed during

the inspection. Detailed and appropriate reports were presented and governors entered into sensible discussions on issues, although the level of questioning was limited, much having been undertaken more fully in committees. The governors produce a thorough Annual Report to Parents. They have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and play an effective role in shaping the direction of the school. However, they have not successfully fulfilled all their statutory duties. In particular, they have not responded fully to all the key issues of the last inspection report, have not ensured pupils receive the statutory curriculum to which they are entitled and have not checked that the school has disapplied pupils from the National Curriculum where necessary.

123. Leadership by the special needs co-ordinator is very good, and the provision is very well organised. Outside agencies are called upon when needed, and their support is used very well to further the care and provision for pupils. The team of teachers and assistants is very strong and they all work together very well for the benefit of the pupils. There are over five hundred pupils on the special needs register and this represents a very large workload for the co-ordinator who manages the provision very well and leads a very efficient department. The assistant co-ordinator provides very able support, and among other duties, manages the computerised programmes that enable pupils to make good progress in numeracy and literacy.

124. Likewise in the Dyslexia Provision, the head of the department leads a dedicated and very knowledgeable team very well. All pupils have statements of special educational needs, and currently there are 38 pupils provided for in the unit. There is a very high level of expertise among the team, and the head of department leads by example with very good teaching, qualifications, and experience. The leadership of the Pupil Support Provision is very good, and the learning support assistant complements this strong leadership very well. Overall the organisation is very well planned and carried out.

125. Financial planning and monitoring are very good. The school's budget is well managed and supports the curriculum priorities set out in the school improvement plan. The current head set up many of the budget systems when he was the deputy with responsibility for this area of the school's management. Whilst keeping oversight of the budget, he has successfully delegated responsibility to an executive officer. The governors are provided with clear information on expenditure by the executive officer, and there is a report from the finance subcommittee to the full governing body at each meeting. Budget holders receive a half-termly statement of their budgets and are able to bid for additional funding during the year. In recent years a budget surplus has been built up in a planned manner to enable the school to invest in capital buildings replacement. A new library, Sixth Form centre, business suite and additional classrooms have been built. Further classrooms are to be added to the building stock. The special needs provision is given additional financial support. ICT systems are used appropriately to ensure efficient use, effective deployment and monitoring of financial resources. The school has successfully re-adopted the Kent County Council financial systems and the most recent auditor's report found the school's financial systems to be in good order. The school is well served by an efficient financial office; daily routines are clearly established and consistently maintained. The school has incorporated the principles of best value into its financial arrangements ensuring that it seeks the most effective solutions to its spending; as a result it has renegotiated the school catering contract with a private contractor and has improved the level of service it receives for ground maintenance from Kent County Council.

126. The strength of the school's current management is exemplified in many ways, not least in the massive improvements that have been made to the site. At all levels of the school, from the pupils, staff and senior managers to the governors, there is a shared commitment to improve and a clear capacity to do so in a collaborative manner. Whilst standards in some areas are below those of other modern schools nationally, they are improving, whilst standards in arts subjects are good. Attendance is satisfactory and behaviour is good. There is much good quality teaching, especially at Key Stage 4. There

are a good range of learning opportunities, including a wide range of extra-curricular experiences and the school farm and the good management. There is very strong provision through units for pupils with special educational needs. Average expenditure per pupil is above average, mainly because of the additional expenditure on pupils with special educational needs. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

127. The match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the curriculum is generally good, and the vast majority of teachers are deployed to teach their own specialist subjects. However, in the last report, it was said that attention needed to be given to the qualifications of teachers in history and modern languages. The findings of this inspection are that in history, some non-specialist teaching is having an adverse effect on learning by some pupils, and in modern languages not all staff are sufficiently fluent in the target language. Improvement is therefore unsatisfactory in these two areas. One or two teachers have to teach across a number of departments, with varying degrees of success. However, compared with the report at the last inspection, the overall staffing in the school has improved well. The school is very pro-active in setting about filling teaching vacancies. As at the time of the inspection, it often runs with one or two more teachers than necessary, efficiently using them to cover lessons and provide additional support for pupils.

128. The majority of teachers are well qualified in their subjects, and some have gained extra qualifications, such as in the special needs areas, where teachers and assistants are very well qualified. These areas are particularly well staffed. For example, the head of the Pupils Support Provision is excellently placed in her post being ideally matched to the demands of the job.

129. There is a very thorough induction programme for newly qualified teachers and those new to the school. If taking up their post in September, they attend the school in the previous July, and meet some of the pupils they will be working with, together with the staff of their department. During their first year they are very well supported and are not asked to cover for absent teachers. Professional development is well cared for and appropriate course are available, such as training about work with learning assistants for special needs. There is a well-organised mentoring system and newly qualified teachers attend meetings and support groups. The school provides very good opportunities for students who are teachers in training and the arrangements made for them at the school are highly thought of by the agencies placing them in schools.

130. Attendance for all staff at courses is well organised, and priorities for staff development are taken with the benefits for the whole school in mind, as well as the departments and individual teachers concerned. The teacher who organises in-service training ensures that priorities are addressed and that all departments receive an equitable share of the finances available. Arrangements for the appraisal and performance management of all staff are good and appropriate observations of lessons and priorities for development are addressed. Individual training and development records are kept on every member of staff. The strength of the school's programme of staff development and performance management, linked to the school improvement plan, departmental development plans and the school's quality assurance systems has been recognised in the award as an Investor in People.

131. The number and range of non-teaching support staff are generally satisfactory, although some are stretched by the demands of the post, such as the two technicians who support the large number of computers that the school has. The number of technicians in science is also low. Administrative staff make a valuable contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school. The school is well cared for with good standards of cleanliness and a site that is usually litter free.

132. The quality of the accommodation is satisfactory. Some areas, such as modern foreign languages and English are very good, with a suite of carpeted rooms each provided

with blinds. The same building contains a very attractive library facility. The quadrangle, the playing fields and the farm all contribute to making the site varied and interesting. Much has been done, in terms of lifts and ramps, to make the accommodation fully accessible to disabled pupils and plans have been made to extend this provision to the one remaining area where it is needed. However, there are some areas that need to be improved. Whilst the outdoor provision for physical education is good, inside the standards that can be attained are adversely affected by the lack of a sports hall and suitable storage space. In addition, the existing gym has awkward dimensions; examinations and assemblies also affect its use. Drama teaching rooms too can be seriously affected by their use for examinations for up to six weeks in a year; also some of them are too small and others poorly equipped for the subject. The girls' toilets are in need of refurbishment and the fitting of smoke alarms. There is insufficient space in the Years 9-11 dining room. However, the changes made recently in both dining rooms with fixed seating in bold colours has had a positive impact on the atmosphere, particularly for Years 7 and 8.

133. Library provision in the school is satisfactory. The atmosphere is very good. It opens for long hours and is well used by pupils at lunchtime and throughout the day. There are two supervised study groups, involving about 40 pupils after school. Provision is well co-ordinated. They are 30 computers, and sufficient CD-ROMs to support pupils' learning. Whilst, overall, the number of books available in the school is sound, there are insufficient reference volumes in the library. The fiction book stock urgently requires updating, particularly as independent reading has become the responsibility of form tutors. The library allowance is insufficient to maintain provision at the current level and inadequate to make the improvements in book stock that are necessary.

134. Since the previous inspection, learning resources have been improved. There are no longer shortages of textbooks in history and physical education. The food technology rooms have been improved and all computers are now of industry standard although different networks do not all have the same version of particular types of software and this results in teachers having to prepare different teaching material on some occasions. The ICT provision has improved significantly with, for example, two suites of computers used exclusively for literacy and numeracy and the addition of two banks of computers in the library. The two computer networks in the library are used for about 80 per cent of lessons.

135. The overall quality of learning resources is satisfactory for Key Stages 3 and 4, but with a number of strengths. In modern languages, all pupils have their own textbooks, which they keep for work at home with other copies in classrooms for use during lessons. Pupils' learning in mathematics is improved by the effective use the subject makes of the computer networks in the library. The school provides many resources for food technology and this enables teachers to plan their lessons more effectively and to increase the pace of learning. The school has established its own Intranet and this includes good quality learning resources produced for business studies. The library has good, well-catalogued stocks of CD-ROMs, newspaper articles, video and audiotapes.

136. The quality of pupils' learning is reduced by some weaknesses in the provision of learning resources. For example, some of the textbooks used in religious education are out of date. There are no computers in the music department so pupils are unable to create, manipulate and refine sounds using ICT; however, the school is in the process of creating a recording studio to help remedy this. ICT equipment arrived in science and design and technology departments just before the inspection so teachers have not had the time to use this effectively across all classes. There are shortages of artefacts for direct observation in art and insufficient visual stimulus material in design and technology. Across many departments, too few resources reflect the multi-cultural nature of British society, with little evidence of non-European instruments in music and few artefacts from other cultures in art, other than in textiles, and the humanities.

Sixth Form

Leadership and management

137. The Sixth Form is very well led and managed. The assistant head, as director of Sixth Form studies, works closely with other colleagues to plan the development of an increasing range of vocational and academic courses. Her organisational skills and considerable experience as GNVQ co-ordinator are used effectively to monitor and improve the quality of the vocational courses that form a part of each student's Sixth Form programme.

138. Induction procedures for Sixth Form students are good and the great majority are happy with their programmes and feel they reflect their preferences and aspirations. There is a commitment to equal access and this is reflected in the number of students with special educational needs that continue their studies into the Sixth Form. The induction process ensures that all students have full and challenging programmes and this reflects the laudable objectives of raising student aspirations and providing the maximum opportunity for personal development and progression. However, that can mean lower successful completion in some courses.

139. A great strength of the Sixth Form leadership is in the positive and caring ethos it provides. This is reflected in the constructive ways students are involved in community and school activities and in the positive relationships that are promoted between staff and students. Pastoral support is well organised with regular and productive tutor meetings that address curriculum as well as guidance and support issues. The director of Sixth Form studies is well supported by the careers co-ordinator and a deputy who organises higher education guidance well and contributes to the increasing numbers of students continuing their education.

140. The director of Sixth Form studies has recently endeavoured to strengthen the role of the tutor in terms of academic monitoring and target setting through the use of tracking sheets. Some progress has been made though this has been slowed in the efforts to introduce a more secure system of establishing baseline assessments and target grades.

Resources

141. The range and quality of learning resources are generally satisfactory. Strengths of the provision, which effectively support students' learning, include the very effective use of the lap top computers and computer-aided design in the GNVQ manufacturing course, and the use of ICT, which is very well integrated into business studies courses. As part of the French course, some students produce good quality learning resources as they teach French in local primary schools. There are a few weaknesses in resources that limit students' learning, and these include insufficient books to support students' wider reading for A Level English literature and a shortage of artefacts for direct observation in art and design. As with the main school, these resources fail to reflect multi-cultural Britain. There is far too little material to support learning in the Sixth Form in the library. Both accommodation and resources are good in some areas, such as business and ICT and access to computers is good overall and valued by students. The Sixth Form student area has been much improved and is attractive and well maintained. Even so, the use of part of that area for health and social care teaching is not ideal and the teaching of the leisure industry courses is done in a variety of locations. Most of the teaching is carried out by experienced specialists. However, in some subject areas, the most effective staff are not always sufficiently deployed.

142. The financial arrangements for the Sixth Form are integrated into the whole school procedures and these are very good. The school endeavours to be cost effective in its Sixth Form provision and this is reflected in the efforts to provide a wide curriculum whilst sustaining viable group sizes. This results in a number of combined teaching groups where students taking different qualification levels in a course are taught together. This does present some challenges in terms of teaching and learning strategies and the director of Sixth Form studies monitors and is endeavouring to improve teaching in some curriculum areas. Currently, once funding arrangements are taken into account, the staff levels of the Sixth Form are maintained by having slightly higher pupil/teacher ratios in Years 7-9. However, the school Sixth Form does provide a valuable complement to the local further education provision with its range of vocational and academic courses. On balance, the Sixth Form does provide value for money, though there need to be further efforts to increase its size both to make it more cost-effective and to reduce the number of mixed course groups that have to be taught.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

143. In order to improve the school further, governors, senior managers and staff should:

- Continue to find ways to raise pupils' attainment, bringing them consistently in line with national averages for secondary modern schools, or better.
- Continue to develop teaching strategies across all subjects, which encourage both active and independent learning by:
 - * sharing more effectively the good practice which exists within many departments;
 - * extending the use of visits;
 - * supporting less effective teachers in their pupil management techniques.
- Continue to review the school's curriculum and its organisation, including:
 - * the timing of lessons and the length of the school day;
 - * the allocation of time to subjects;
 - * the grouping of pupils;
 - * the deployment of staff;
 - * the number of examination subjects and options taken by pupils at Key Stage 4.
- Review the school's provision for pupils' cultural development, particularly the multi-cultural dimension, by:
 - * extending opportunities to develop pupils' awareness and understanding of the diverse ethnic cultures that make up Britain today.
- Continue to develop systems for monitoring and support of pupils' academic performance and teachers' use of assessment, by:
 - * extending the role of form tutors and heads of year in academic monitoring;
 - * improving further teachers' use of assessments to inform planning;
 - * encouraging marking, which indicates to pupils their standards and what they have to do to improve;
 - * improving the quality of reports, so that all teachers provide a clear picture of actual attainment and how to develop further.

144. There are some other issues identified in the report, which the governors should address and may wish to include in their action plan. These include:

- * provision for religious education;
- * compliance with the statutory curriculum, in particular design and technology at Key Stage 4, and disapplication of those pupils not following the curriculum;
- * consistent application of the 'thought for the day', in order to satisfy requirements for a daily act of collective worship;
- * improvements to the condition of some of the girls' toilets and provision of seating for older pupils in assemblies.

Sixth Form

145. In order to improve the Sixth Form further, governors, senior managers and staff should:

- * establish sufficiently rigorous means of tracking students' academic progress and setting clear targets;
- * improve the planning and organisation of the teaching and learning in combined courses to ensure all students make good progress;
- * share the good teaching practice in some courses that encourages independent and active learning across all curriculum areas;
- * ensure key skills teaching utilises fully the opportunities for development and assessment in the vocational and other courses;
- * make sure that students are more realistically matched to their course choices.

THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNITS

Dyslexia Provision

146. The dyslexia provision is very good. There are 38 pupils attached to the provision, all of whom have statements of special educational needs. In general, they make good progress towards their targets, but progress is an individual matter for each pupil and some make very good gains in literacy and numeracy skills. The high level of expertise demonstrated by all the staff attached to the provision enables this measure of progress, and pupils receive much individual attention.

147. Teaching and learning are very good. All the staff attached to the Provision, teachers and learning support assistants, are very knowledgeable about dyslexia and use appropriate methods for teaching. Planning of lessons is very good and shows a very clear understanding of the 'little and often' maxim that is tried and tested where dyslexia is concerned. Teachers plan changes in activities so that pupils are able to concentrate well throughout lessons. They also add enrichment to lessons, which brings them to life and raises pupils' interest and learning. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, a visitor who had been an evacuee during the war came to talk to pupils and answer the questions they had prepared. This was in support of the English book they are reading, called 'Carrie's War.' In this way, pupils learnt what it was like, and they asked some very good questions about life

and schooling in the Second World War. Other pupils have visited the theatre when studying 'Macbeth', so that they could add a visual appreciation of the story to their reading of the text. Teachers are well aware that a multi-sensory approach is best for their pupils.

148. Expectations for good behaviour and good work habits are very high and pupils respond accordingly. They concentrate well and during the period of the inspection their attitudes and behaviour were very good.

149. Pupils are withdrawn from some lessons in order to have this extra help in literacy and numeracy. Staff ensure that they do not miss work in their class lessons by following the same texts, such as the Shakespeare play, or in mathematics, the work on probability seen in Year 8 lessons. In addition, pupils concentrate on literacy skills such as spelling, reading and writing. For example, Year 9 have been looking at newspaper articles to understand the idea of reporting 'bias.' They were seen researching this in a piece of writing, and then using computers to write up their findings. The article was about BSE, and most wrote about the 'vegetarian bias' of the piece in question.

150. Parents are well informed about pupils' progress and targets, and they attend reviews of these. The staff maintains good contacts both by telephone and by personal consultations, and parents have expressed their appreciation of this provision. However, within the department there is insufficient tracking and reporting of individual pupils' progress, and this same problem is found in some subject reports, which are collected in time for reviews. Some subjects report well, but this good practice is not consistent across all subjects. The department is aware of this and already has plans to support more detailed tracking of progress.

151. Leadership and management are very good, and the head of the Provision leads a strong team of dedicated people. Patience, and very good knowledge of pupils is very evident, and the provision is organised very efficiently. The files and records are exemplary, and contain full details and papers relating to pupils' time at the school. Outside agencies are used fully and their reports are added to the files and used at reviews. The Dyslexia Provision is a strength of the school, and rightly has a good reputation for its work with these pupils.

Physical disability provision

152. The school's provision for pupils who have a physical disability is very good. There is support for up to eight pupils within the provision. There is a strong determination that these pupils should be fully integrated into the life of the school and this is achieved very well. For example, teachers and pupils alike make every effort to help and accommodate pupils in wheelchairs. For the most part, pupils with these disabilities are independent, but sometimes need help with a door or negotiating a difficult area. There is no shortage of willing helpers.

153. As an example of the school's inclusion of the pupils with physical disability, in a Year 7 class, a very lively 'election' lesson was seen. Pupils were in the process of electing two representatives to the Year Council, and candidates had to make election speeches. The class were able to ask searching questions about the representation they could expect. They chose the pupil who uses a wheelchair as one of their representatives, and it was very clear that they trusted him to represent them with confidence and determination.

154. At one of the lunchtimes during the inspection, two very able cooks prepared a stir-fry lunch, served with a delightful salad, and all very well presented. Four pupils meet weekly to do this, two disabled and two able-bodied. It is a lively social occasion demonstrating co-operation and support across the range of disabilities but including other pupils as well. The adult who leads these sessions is a model representative of the very high level of help and

support offered to these pupils in a variety of situations. They help with physical education very well, and give physiotherapy and support whenever the pupils need it.

155. The school has improved the access for wheelchairs very well since the last inspection. There is now only one small area, an upper floor of science laboratories, where there is no wheelchair access. However, as an example of the school's attention to this, if a pupil is assigned to a class that uses an upper laboratory, the whole class switches to a downstairs room to give easy access.

156. Support and care for those pupils with physical disabilities are under the management of the school's special needs co-ordinator. Their records, medical support and progress through the school are very well recorded. Each pupil has a good care plan and the co-ordinator has seen to it that there is a risk assessment carried out, so that should any accident occur, all those concerned know exactly what to do. Parents are fully informed and there is very good contact with home. There are two students in the Sixth Forms who have physical disabilities, and they are very largely independent in getting about the school and joining in activities for post-sixteen students.

157. Overall, the school makes every effort to include all these pupils in the everyday life and activity of the school, and the school's population accepts them as part of the whole, helping where necessary, and integrating them very well. It is exemplary in its inclusion for these pupils, and perhaps the best indication is that they do not stand out as anything special, because they blend in so well.

Pupil support provision

158. The school's pupil support provision is very good. Unlike those for dyslexia and physically disabled pupils, which were set up with funding from the local authority, this unit was set up and is funded by the school. Pupils who experience behavioural difficulties of a more severe nature may be placed in this provision for one subject each week over a period of time. Some may be placed for a longer period of time for all subjects on their timetable, but usually not for more than a total of a few days. The unit is also used to encourage back into schooling some more disaffected pupils who have become school phobics or those with emotional problems. The provision is very well planned and carried out by the two experienced adults who organise the programme. Other members of staff help by leading in a particular lesson, but the head of the provision and the learning assistant are always on duty and have the oversight of all that is done. Close attention is paid to pupils' manners, the way pupils ask for help, their appearance, and their attitudes. They are acquiring very good learning and study habits, because the provision sets out to teach them how to learn. The whole day is very well organised and there is usually a quiet atmosphere of well-focused work. Pupils receive help whenever they want it, provided that they ask politely and appropriately. The emphasis here is always on good order and good behaviour, and the two permanent staff members address these very well.

159. Pupils work at their own mainstream timetables and their subject teachers give them work, and subsequently mark it. The function of the provision is to improve pupils' general attitude and behaviour in their life in the school, and especially in lessons. These objectives are achieved very well.

160. Staffing is excellent, and the two permanent adults who supervise the provision are ideally suited to this, and bring exactly the right measure of organisation, expectation and respect for pupils. The presence of a senior member of staff helps the atmosphere of work and good order. During the period of the inspection, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were very good because teachers and the assistant maintain very high expectations and do not accept any lowering of standards. Although there have clearly been problems which have led pupils to be placed in this provision, there is no repressive atmosphere, and pupils are

treated with respect which engenders an atmosphere of co-operation and effort.

161. Management of this provision is very good, with organisation, preparation and planning all of a very high standard. 'Firm but fair' describes the expectations that have been established, and there have been many indications, during this inspection, that pupils respect this and respond accordingly. The Pupil Support Provision is a strength of the school, often preventing pupils from exclusion from the school, and enabling them to re-enter lessons with improved attitudes and behaviour.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	249
	Sixth Form	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		136

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7-11

Number	5	75	78	73	15	2	0
Percentage	2	30	31	29	6	1	0

Sixth Form

Number	1	4	20	20	1	0	0
Percentage	2	9	43	43	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7-Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1377	127
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	191	3

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	86	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	569	24

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.2
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	147	134	281

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	70	69	75
	Girls	90	75	68
	Total	160	144	143
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	57 (54)	52 (57)	51 (48)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	24 (16)	27 (26)	16 (13)
	National	31 (28)	42 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	75	63	75
	Girls	96	74	64
	Total	171	137	139
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	61 (61)	49 (50)	49 (50)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	26 (28)	17 (26)	10 (16)
	National	31 (31)	41 (39)	32 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	118	90	208

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	26	112	118
	Girls	28	89	90
	Total	54	200	208
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	26 (31)	97 (96)	100 (99)
	National	49.8 (47.4)	88.8 (90.6)	94.5 (95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	29.8 (30)
	National	39.1 (38.4)

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

Attainment at the end of the Sixth Form (Year 13)

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A Level or AS-Level examinations:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	19	32	51

Average points score per candidate	Combined A/AS & Advanced GNVQ Score			
	Number entered	Male	Female	All
School	51	5.6	12.0	9.6(5.9)
National	N/A	N/A	N/A	17.4

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	22	41 (65)
	National	-	66.5 (73.2)

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	4
Black - other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	1
White	1268
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Some pupils have not recorded ethnic background in school records.

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	66	5
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)	91.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5

Education support staff:

Y7 - Y13

Total number of education support staff	54
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1378

Deployment of teachers:

Y7 - Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.7
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Average teaching group size:

Y7 - Y11

Key Stage 3	22.1
Key Stage 4	19.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	4,122,259.00
Total expenditure	3,770,475.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,599.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	243,874.00
Balance carried forward to next year	595,658.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	44
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	47

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

1504
532

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	51	5	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	51	1	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	57	7	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	54	13	3	2
The teaching is good.	38	55	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	46	11	2	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	40	5	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	34	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	37	48	9	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	46	45	3	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	46	6	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	37	6	1	8

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH

162. Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths:

- Very good leadership and management.
- Very good level of improvement since the last inspection.
- Very good curriculum at Key Stage 3, which is already beginning to improve standards.
- The very good provision for dyslexic pupils and pupils with other special needs.

Areas for improvement:

- Improve GCSE results in English and English literature.
- Provide frequent planned opportunities for classroom discussion and debate. Extend the range of opportunities for pupils to speak in more formal situations.
- Systematically develop and extend pupils' private reading.
- Strengthen whole school procedures for the redrafting of writing and specifically encourage independent work.

163. When pupils enter the school, their attainment is well below the national average. They make good progress in Years 7-9 and satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11.

164. In the national tests at age 14, in the Year 2000, which was the last reporting year, the percentage of pupils to attain Levels 5 and 6 and above was below the national average for all schools, but reached the national average for secondary modern schools. Pupils' point scores fell below the national average for their age group by the equivalent of six months progress. Girls outperformed boys. Standards improved slightly against an improving national picture in 1998 and 1999, but dropped slightly in 2000. When compared with national benchmarks and schools in similar contexts, pupils' point score remained below average. This year, there has been a significant improvement. The percentage of those achieving Level 5 and above remains below the national average, but those achieving Level 6 and above is broadly in line with it. The gap between the pupils' test results and teachers' assessments is now less marked.

165. It is a strong feature of the department that almost all pupils are entered for the GCSE examination in English literature in addition to in English language. In 2000, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A* - C was significantly lower than the national average in both subjects for both all maintained and secondary modern schools nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* - G, however, equalled that of all schools and exceeded that of secondary modern schools nationally. Achievement dropped in both subjects this year, with the proportion of A*-C grades now well below the average for modern schools nationally. Standards looks set to rise again in 2002, as effective strategies have been introduced to counteract underachievement.

166. By the time they are 15, pupils' standards for speaking and listening are below average, although they are capable of listening carefully to the teacher and each other. When well-chosen and worthwhile novels such as 'Goodnight Mr Tom' are read to them, they pay rapt attention. They answer direct questions from the teacher confidently, but briefly, and need heavy prompting to elaborate further what they have to say. Pupils have limited skills of oral collaboration, but work effectively in pairs. Pupils do not always fully realise that speaking styles should suit the nature of a formal occasion. Although some of them have opportunities to contribute in assemblies and to speak at school council, this aspect of their oral attainment is a weakness. By the end of Year 9, pupils' reading skills are below average, although they are beginning to pay the close attention to text required for

successful literary criticism. Standards are improving in response to well taught reading skills in the good literacy lessons which have been introduced in Key Stage 3. In a very good lesson in Year 9, higher attaining pupils identified implied meaning in a text, and demonstrated a secure knowledge of bias and emotive language. In this lesson, they showed clearly that they knew the difference between fact and opinion. In another very good lesson on 'The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire', by Conan Doyle, pupils successfully interrogated the text to come to firm conclusions as to aspects of Sherlock Holmes' character revealed in it. In this lesson, pupils reliably identified the genre of the text. They realised that this piece of detective fiction was set in the real landscape of Sussex. They took pleasure in identifying the way Doyle creates red herrings and prevents the reader from solving the mystery too easily. Lower attaining pupils, however, needed a great deal of help to explore the language and layout of a tourist information pamphlet at this stage. They answered factual questions about it, collaborating with a partner, and using a dictionary confidently to look up such words as 'fortifications', 'spectacular' and 'maritime'. In this lesson, pupils annotated the text appropriately to pinpoint the words they did not understand. All pupils successfully tackle a Shakespeare play by the time they are 14. In a Year 8 lesson on 'The Tempest' all displayed an awareness of the main characters, and at least a basic knowledge of the plot. In this lesson pupils eagerly read aloud extracts from the play, fluently and with good expression. Their enthusiasm reflected both the subject knowledge and skill of the teacher, and forms an excellent basis for further study of Shakespeare's plays.

167. Pupils' writing by the end of Year 9 is sometimes well above average, but is generally below it. Pupils write in a range of styles, including poems, letters, book reviews, news reports, pamphlets and diary entries, in addition to simple narrative. Well-written and heartfelt advice to primary school pupils on how to cope with life in a secondary school well illustrates their capacity to write for a specific audience. Logbooks 'Kept by a vagrant' show skills of empathy and imagination. There are some good examples of independent writing, well presented, written to good length and substantially correct. Major errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, which redrafting does not entirely eradicate, are key weaknesses in pupils' attainment. Pupils use ICT effectively both to redraft their writing and present it in striking and original ways.

168. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment remains below the national average, but it is higher than the most recent GCSE results suggest. Pupils usually listen attentively to the teacher and to each other. Their capacity for pair work has improved and informs their reading. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, in response to very good teaching, lower attaining pupils collaborated well in pairs to describe and evaluate photographs of the fighting in Kosovo. They responded to these images in the context of 'Dulce et decorum est' by Wilfred Owen, and 'War photographer' by Carol Ann Duffy, and engaged in productive discussion on which were the most significant images of war. After more oral collaboration, they were able to connect these with the imagery of the poems they were studying.

169. Higher attaining pupils understand texts in ways beyond the literal. A Year 11 class identified 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' as a metaphor for humankind, and were able to say why this was so. They paraphrased 4 extracts from the story to illustrate Dr Jekyll's philosophy of human nature. They engaged with the symbolism of the pieces when they realised that Hyde was small but grew as the story went on. Lower attainers in a lesson in Year 11 had difficulty, however, in fully understanding a small range of poems by Simon Armitage. They did not understand idiomatic English expressions such as 'tipped up' and 'blubbed'. In this lesson, they understood the poems only at a basic level but used a dictionary effectively to support their learning.

170. Pupils' writing is below average by the end of Year 11, but coursework is carefully redrafted. Literary criticism is descriptive, rather than analytical. Independent writing, to a good length, continues to be a strong feature of the work of the highest attainers.

171. Pupils make good progress in Years 7-9. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is improving, primarily because they are well taught. Pupils respond well to their lessons and are eager to learn. Of the ten lessons seen in Key Stage 3, two were good, four were very good, and one was excellent. The rest were satisfactory. Of the nine lessons seen in Key Stage 4, two were good, four were very good and the rest satisfactory. Department policy decrees that lesson objectives are clearly defined and shared with pupils. This was seen in all lessons during the inspection and provided a strong focus for teaching and learning.

172. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, so they are able to teach a wide range of texts authoritatively and effectively. Their knowledge is such that the introduction of lessons based on the national literacy initiative has posed no obstacle for them. Their knowledge of external tests and examinations taken by the pupils is very good, and they prepare pupils well.

173. In the better lessons, teaching methods are exciting. They stimulate and challenge pupils to do their best. In a Year 7 lesson, a requirement for pupils to analyse a recipe for a boiled egg formed a firm basis for them to write a recipe for a book. This interested them and led to good concentration and a high level of motivation. In this lesson they developed inventive vocabulary for measurements and methods, and came, through this, to a secure understanding of the way genre is identified. A lesson in Year 10 on Romeo and Juliet took the form of a television quiz show. Pupils responded to this energetically and they gained in oral confidence and knowledge of the play. In another lesson in Year 9, pupils were asked to solve a Sherlock Holmes mystery on the basis of a letter, which allowed the great detective to solve the case before he left London. This lesson intrigued pupils, and helped them to read the text very closely.

174. Expectation is high and pupils are challenged to learn well. In a lesson in Year 9, pupils successfully, and very rapidly, analysed a well chosen and well written article 'Bye bye baglady', published in the 'Big Issue', in terms of language, structure, layout and mood. In this rigorous lesson, the pace was very brisk and much ground was covered. Highly appropriate supplementary material promoted paired analysis and helped pupils learn. All completed the analysis within stringent restraints, and all were able to quote from the article to support the assertions they made.

175. Teachers teach basic skills well, particularly evident in the literacy lessons in Years 7-9. Management of potentially difficult pupils is so good that in some lessons it appears to be effortless. Learning support assistants are well managed and make a positive contribution to pupils' attainment. The standard of planning for the inclusion of girls as well as boys, pupils with special educational needs, and those of high attainment is a strength. Strategies to include all pupils in the good learning provision range from pre-planned seating, well and specifically targeted questioning and the active promotion of collaborative learning.

176. Standards in English are improving because the subject is very well managed. The curriculum is now very good at Key Stage 3. A summer school for 30 pupils successfully raises the achievement of specially selected pupils before they enter Year 7. Literacy lessons have been successfully introduced. Practical ideas booklets to use in every lesson improve pupils' vocabulary and familiarise them with technical terms used in literary criticism. Nationally produced materials are now being successfully trialled by the school. These initiatives are already beginning to raise standards. There is expert teaching for those who have dyslexia and other special educational needs. These pupils are included in all departmental provision. The very good procedures for monitoring attainment at both the

stages allow learning activities to be well pitched according to pupils' prior attainment, and this maximises progress. Resources are well structured to support the learning of all abilities. Pupils are prepared well and specifically for all external tests and examinations with extra lessons available to all.

177. There are good and effective strategies to address the particular needs of boys. The needs of girls now require systematic emphasis. There are special sessions for gifted and talented pupils who are presented with demanding texts and given particular help in their analysis of them, so they are enabled make an appropriate level of progress.

178. Since the last inspection, there has been a very good level of improvement. Although standards have not yet improved sufficiently, strategies for raising achievements are now in place, properly monitored and seen to be working. The percentage of those achieving higher levels in the national achievement tests and GCSE examinations has risen. The number of pupils achieving Levels A and B in English literature has improved. Teaching and learning are now well monitored. Resources have been improved significantly and ICT is used to help pupils redraft work. The schemes of work have been rewritten and are of a good quality with very clear assessment objectives. Procedures for pupils' assessment are now a strength. There are now opportunities for teachers to enter into valuable professional dialogue with pupils every six to eight weeks, and this helps their self-assessment. The work of the department is now very well monitored through assessment and co-moderation.

179. Leadership of the department is very good and management is well informed and highly efficient. A high standard of professional dialogue informs all activities. Teachers are enthusiastic and like-minded. There is a will and a high level of capacity to raise standards further. The head of department contributes to the meetings of the senior curriculum management team.

MATHEMATICS

180. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths:

- Provides a wide range of learning opportunities for pupils of all abilities.
- Establishes good relationships with pupils.
- Uses computers well to develop knowledge skills and understanding.

Areas for improvement:

- The results achieved in national tests and public examinations.
- The expectations of higher attaining pupils.
- The use of computers in the classroom, independent of the school facilities.

181. The standards of attainment in tests for 14 year olds in 2000 were well below the national average for all schools. However, when compared to secondary modern schools nationally, the results were close to average figures. Overall, the percentage of pupils achieving Levels 5 or 6 was close to national expectations but only a few pupils gained higher grades. This is a reflection of the attainment of pupils upon their entry to the school and indicates satisfactory progress during this key stage. The 2001 results were similar to the previous year, although there was a drop in the proportion achieving Level 5 or more, compared to a rise in both English and science. In 2000, GCSE results for grades A*-C were well below national figures for all schools and below the national average for secondary modern schools nationally. However, when compared to the prior attainment of pupils at Key Stage 3 the results were higher than would have been expected. Results in 2001 were similar to those in 2000, in comparison to English and science where attainment fell. Results in mathematics now compare favourably with those in the other core subjects.

Recent figures also indicate that, contrary to the national trend, boys are achieving better results than girls, although the gap narrowed in 2001. There has been concern about the low attainment of boys in the school. The department has been aware of this and has had some obvious success in raising standards. There was no undue emphasis seen during the inspection of concentrating on boys, as the department works hard to raise the attainment levels of all pupils. The department met targets set for it in GCSE in both 2000 and 2001 and has been set a more challenging target for 2002, to bring results in line with the average for modern schools nationally.

182. Overall, the quality of teaching during the inspection was satisfactory with about half the lessons seen judged as good, a few very good and only one lesson unsatisfactory. A few of the satisfactory lessons had some weak features but did provide sufficient challenge to the pupils. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 was better than in Years 7-9 and the teaching of the Sixth Form was also good. Better lessons start well and are delivered at a brisk pace with constant checking of pupils' understanding. In these lessons, the subject content is presented in short manageable sections with time limited exercises and frequent reviews to confirm the development of understanding. These time limited exercises help to sustain pace and concentration for the whole lesson. These lessons are also visually stimulating. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on algebraic techniques, one teacher used strong colours on a prepared overhead projector transparency to illustrate the order of multiplying out brackets. The pupils used similar colours when making notes to aid their understanding. Several of the better lessons involve pupils in the learning process by encouraging them to work the solution to a particular question on the board in front of the whole class. In one Year 10 class, pupils were attentive when this was happening and insisted that the pupil working out the answer also gave the correct explanation of the method involved at the same time. The weaker lessons lack the clear structure needed to encourage sound learning and reinforcement of techniques. Marking is satisfactory but there are some inconsistencies across such a large department. It is supportive and encouraging and there are a few instances where the marking is giving good guidance to improve the solution to questions. Positive feedback is given to pupils and the use of a common system of comments also includes targets for future improvement. Teaching is reinforced by regular homework. This is set according to general school policy and usually supports the work covered in lessons. Only in a few instances is homework used to develop independent learning skills. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for: they are noted in teachers' lesson plans and if necessary they are given extra support. Their Individual Education Plans include, where appropriate, numeracy targets. The mathematics department, as part of their support, sets the targets for these pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards these targets.

183. The use of computers is well integrated into the curriculum and some effective teaching was seen using spreadsheets, a commercial graph drawing package and document processing techniques. The range of expertise of the teachers in using computers varies from competent to good but the good planning of lessons enables pupils of all levels of expertise to make good gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 were investigating sequences and generating number patterns using spreadsheets. This was a direct application of their algebraic skills into a new area and for many pupils the use of the formula and 'fill' capabilities were new experiences. The good teaching of the lesson easily overcame any difficulties that arose. Average attaining pupils in Year 10 were using the spreadsheet to calculate the median and mean from sets of data. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 were investigating a range of graphs and were encouraged to draw conclusions about the constants in the various equations. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 had a challenging problem to write a worksheet to increase, decrease or find percentage amounts of different quantities for pupils who knew the basic mathematics of percentages but could not speak English. In

these lessons the teacher supported pupils well and guided their learning rather than simply telling pupils how to solve the problem. Pupils are also mutually supportive and help each other. In the past, mixed grouping has been used but this was felt to disadvantage many girls, so now similar gender pairs are used.

184. Good teaching was reflected in the positive attitudes shown by pupils. Despite the distances across the school site, pupils arrive at their lessons as promptly as possible and are ready to work. They are courteous, polite and very willing to discuss their work, referring to previous work covered to support their knowledge. Pupils' books are generally neat and well kept. The presentation of work of higher attaining pupils is good. Lower attaining pupils' work is not as neat but they do make the effort to present their work in as neat a manner as possible. Pupils in Year 7 are enthusiastic about their work. In one class, the reinforcement of numeracy skills was so effective that pupils were very keen to move to new work and the teacher had to continually provide more challenging material to sustain their enthusiasm. Average attaining pupils in Year 9 were working on the results of the previous lesson and enthusiastically tackled long division to work out answers. Only at this point did they then check these with a calculator. When developing their algebraic techniques, higher attaining pupils constantly referred to the summary of previous work on directed numbers to ensure that the signs of different products were correct. They also were encouraged to check their work by substituting in the original question. Pupils in Year 11 often annotate solutions to problems with further notes to provide a sound basis for revision for external examinations.

185. Pupils are mutually supportive in their lessons. This was very evident when pupils were using computers, as some had a much higher degree of expertise than others. They discuss the solutions to problems and suggest reasons to each other for a particular solution. Those with greater expertise were encouraging their peers to develop by indicating the techniques to use rather than just doing it for them. Instances where pupils were confident enough to work the solutions to problems on the board were always received with the attention of the whole class. Pupils mark some of their work themselves either by using the answers at the back of the textbook or by having the answers called out by the teacher. Where this happens there is no copying or altering answers to give the impression of correct work. Pupils of all abilities participate well in their lessons but it requires good levels of classroom management and discipline to contain some lower attaining classes and curtail disruption.

185. Many pupils enter the school in Year 7 well below the average expected of them. They are set by ability during their first term and a majority of them refine and develop their numeracy skills in line with the government plan to ensure that all pupils achieve Level 4 of the National Curriculum by the end of Year 7. The higher attaining pupils were seen to be developing the skills necessary in starting to generalise expressions and use algebra. This is extended to more involved expressions through Year 8, so that by Year 9 the higher attaining pupils can solve linear equations and use the patterns in number sequences to generate expressions for any term of linear and quadratic sequences. This work, and other work seen in pupils' books, is at Levels 6 and 7 of the National Curriculum. This is slightly higher than national expectations for pupils at the age of 14. However, only a minority of pupils are at these levels overall. Average attaining pupils develop their numerical skills practically, so that in Year 9 they can investigate the relationship between the circumference and diameter of a circle and make the resulting calculations using pencil and paper methods before checking with a calculator. This is at about the expected level for all pupils nationally by the age of 14. Lower attaining pupils reinforce their numerical skills by working with percentages of whole numbers. Although the standards achieved by pupils in external tests is well below the national average for all schools, because of their low standards on entry pupils make satisfactory progress. The work during Years 10 and 11 builds on the foundation of earlier years. The higher attaining pupils develop their algebraic skills so that they can manipulate and solve a range of linear and quadratic equations with confidence. In general, they follow the GCSE course at the Intermediate Level with a few pupils being extended to take the higher-level examination. This extension work is covered outside of

normal class time. The expectations of these pupils could be raised so that more could follow the course and take the higher-level examination at the end of Year 11. Lower attaining pupils develop their numerical skills in percentages and ratio so that they can enter GCSE at Foundation Level. The progress all pupils make during these two years is good and only a few pupils are not entered for an external examination in mathematics.

186. The department is well managed by an experienced teacher. The curriculum fulfils statutory requirements and all attainment targets are fully covered. Work from the attainment target, 'Using and Applying Mathematics,' is further reinforced by the literacy policy operated within the department. This policy encourages the use and understanding of key words and in addition it gives good guidance on writing frames for investigations. Many pupils have derived great benefit from this structure and have subsequently obtained good marks for the coursework component of the examination. The scheme of work is detailed; it is referenced to the National Curriculum and contains indications of timings for topics and some help and guidance for teachers. There are regular opportunities for assessment built into the scheme and the results of these are analysed and used to inform future teaching. This structure enables new teachers to be quickly integrated into the department. There is regular monitoring of teaching and learning. The full effect of this has yet to be seen but it has led to a slow but continual rise in standards in most years. The accommodation is adequate for the delivery of the curriculum but some of the classrooms are too small to enable a full range of activities. The department is spread over three areas of the school. Whilst this is an interim measure, to ensure that there is day-to-day co-ordination, one senior member of the department oversees each area. One room is hazardous in that the floor covering is in poor condition and pupils are in danger of tripping. There has been some attempt at securing this but there is urgent need to repair this area. The wall displays in all rooms are generally good with displays of pupils' work and some commercial posters. Some of these posters display the wonder of mathematical patterns in the natural world. This all helps to sustain a positive ethos within the department. The resources are adequate to support learning. Many teachers use an overhead projector. The use of these could be further enhanced by correctly mounted screens, which would improve the overall presentation of lesson and enhance learning further. There are no computer facilities within the classrooms. This hampers their use in lessons, as bookings of the other school computer facilities have to be made in advance. Computer facilities and the means of displaying the output to a class would enable the use of ICT to further enhance teaching and learning.

188. Since the last inspection there have been several improvements. The head of department, who was new at the last inspection, has developed in the role to become an effective leader. She has encouraged the department to raise standards. This has led to a rise in the overall standards of numeracy and a steady rise in results in the national tests for 14 year olds and also at GCSE Level.

SCIENCE

189. Overall, the quality of provision in science is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- Rural science and the school farm which enthuse and develop pupils both academically and socially.
- Good systems of assessment, which are well used to monitor pupils' attainment and progress.
- The rapidity with which the department has improved its organisation and structures in recent years.

Areas for improvement:

- The involvement of pupils in the formulation and the development of ideas.
- The further development of the use of information technology in the laboratories.
- The recording and understanding of practicals.

190. Attainment on entry is well below average. Pupils' attainment in the 2000 National Curriculum tests, taken at age 14, was well below the national average in comparison with all schools. When compared to modern schools nationally, with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, standards were average. Standards rose in 2001, when 51 per cent of the pupils gained Level 5 or better and 16 per cent Level 6. Boys did best in 2000, but in 2001 the performances of boys and girls were similar. There was a downward trend in results until 1999, since when standards have been rising. The school's performance in science is now a little better than that found in mathematics, but a little weaker than that seen in English.

191. At GCSE, in 2000, the school's standards in double and single award science were below the national average compared with all schools and average when compared to modern schools. In 2001, standards declined. The proportion of pupils obtaining grades in the range A*-G in 2000 was in line with that seen nationally.

192. In single award science, in 2000, pupils obtained 28 per cent grades A*-C, which is above the national average for all schools, but in 2001 this dropped to 14 per cent. In double award science, for 2000, 47 per cent obtained grades A*-C, which was close to the national average, but in 2001 this fell to 40 per cent. However, a much smaller than average proportion of pupils take double science. Results in rural science, which is taken as an option, have been very variable. They were very low in 1999 and 2001, but above the national average for 2000. Results in rural science are influenced by the ability profile of successive groups, which varies significantly. Considering science as a whole, over the last few years there has been no trend, although 2001 was a bad year. Girls' performance has been superior to that of boys, except for 2001 when girls' results dropped significantly in both single and double science. The school's performance in science, in 2001, is weaker than that seen in mathematics, but similar to that found in English. Targets, set for double science, were met in 2000 and 2001, but not those for single science. Very challenging targets have been set for 2002.

193. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Pupils enter the school from a large number of feeder schools with widely different topic coverage depths and well below average attainment. By Year 9 they have maintained this standard, in line with the average for secondary modern schools. Learning is most rapid in experimental science, where pupils quickly acquire many useful skills for carrying out experiments with a variety of scientific apparatus. Year 7 exemplify this. They showed that they could handle heating and measuring apparatus safely and with precision, whilst comparing the energy released by two fuels. As the course progresses, greater volumes of written work are produced and topics are covered in more detail resulting in increasing skill levels and a greater range of

knowledge. By Year 8, some pupils are able to work practically on cantilevers and to consider the response of different materials to compression and tension. Year 9 pupils can understand what happens when magnesium is heated and why it gains in weight. Examination of pupils' work and the observation of lessons show that last year's rise in standards at age 14 has been maintained.

194. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory; the higher and lower attaining pupils do well. A top set in Year 11 demonstrated that they could understand how genetic engineering might be undertaken in terms of DNA, DNA enzymes and plasmids. During the two years' teaching, written work shows a steady expansion of topic breadth, which, together with a further deepening, strengthens skill levels and provides good opportunities to develop a fuller understanding. For instance, Year 10 pupils showed that they had acquired a good understanding of leaf structures and that they could relate these to their functions. Examination of pupils' work and observation of lessons, suggest that standards have returned to those of 2000.

195. In all years, pupils with special educational needs are well known to their teachers, who produce a graded approach and sometimes work especially tailored to their needs. In the main, these pupils receive very good assistance from the learning support staff and consequently make good progress towards the targets on their Individual Education Plans. Higher attaining pupils are presented with more demanding work, due to the setting system, but they are not always stimulated within their sets to go further. Whilst pupils do use mathematics quite competently in science, numeracy is an area that requires greater emphasis. Pupils show quite good listening, speaking and writing skills and the department has some good strategies for exercising these. The pupils' achievement in the use of information technology in the laboratory is unsatisfactory at present. This has been due to a lack of suitable equipment, but this has just arrived in the school and the department is keen to develop its use.

196. Most pupils clearly enjoy practical work; they generally behave well and work hard so long as there is plenty for them to do. However, they are frequently better at doing things than understanding why they are doing them and what they mean. Apparatus is handled with respect and increasing precision.

197. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Whilst the majority of lessons are either good or satisfactory, some are very good: but a minority are unsatisfactory. Lessons are carefully planned and organised with timings to deliver definite objectives. This usually results in good learning at a good pace. Most lessons begin by checking and reinforcing what was learned last time to provide a suitable starting point, although not many lessons leave enough time to consolidate the new learning at the end. Lessons provide pupils with good factual information and their learning is checked at regular intervals by teacher questions. There is a good mix of theory and practical, which helps to bring the subject to life. In the best lessons the pupils' ideas are sought and then they are encouraged to develop them by means of skilfully posed teacher questions. This makes pupils think, maintains interest and aids remembering. Such a lesson is exemplified where Year 10 were relating function to structure in skin. Here, pupils generated the ideas, and then the teacher injected just the right questions to bring about their full development. Where lessons are less stimulating teachers deliver facts, pupils copy down notes or work through worksheets and answer teachers' questions to check their understanding. The practicals in these lessons are usually carried out successfully with the pupils filling out printed results sheets; but with little idea, or desire to gain it, of why they are doing what they are doing or of what it means. The structures employed for recording practical work are poor. Almost all work is marked, much of it with useful comments and suggestions for improvement, although there is much variation between teachers. Suggestions for immediate improvement, such as finishing work, are not always followed through. Homework is

usually set and it provides a useful extension to the learning. In the best classes learning is greatly helped by the good relationships with the teachers which result in a productive exchange when pupils do not understand, and encourages them to ask their own questions. The satisfactory teaching is leading to satisfactory learning.

198. The subject is well managed and led by a hard working and thoughtful head of department, who responds well to the matters raised by the annual quality assurance report. There have been considerable difficulties recently in staffing the department, which have affected standards, but now that these have been largely overcome the department should go forward. The curriculum is good and new schemes of work are nearing completion. It is taught to a standard that allows the higher attainers to access higher levels and grades. There are a number of good clubs, such as the Engineers Club, but the curriculum is not at present enhanced by either fieldwork or visits to places of scientific interest. There are good systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. The outcomes are well used to modify curriculum planning, but their use to rectify individual pupil weaknesses is an area for improvement. Two effective technicians, who deploy and maintain the equipment, support the subject, but there is not enough technician time to service so many laboratories when there is a lot of practical work. The accommodation is satisfactory with many large laboratories, but their shape has presented some problems in monitoring pupils. The resources are satisfactory and are supplemented by good provision in the main library of books, CD-ROMS and computers linked to the Internet.

199. The provision for rural science is very good. There is the school farm with many animals, which is supported by a very hard working and effective stockperson, who enthuses and guides pupils very well. There is good teaching, which involves, informs and interests pupils. This was well exemplified by a Year 11 group who were persuaded to immerse themselves in problems relating to monohybrid crosses. All were interested, all worked hard and much was learned. Relationships are friendly, informal and productive leading to hard working and caring pupils. There are well attended out of school clubs and the Young Farmers join in with outside events, especially those offered by shows. This is an area where the school has won many prizes.

200. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards in Years 7 to 9 remain much where they were, but those in Years 10 and 11 have risen. Schemes of work and teachers' planning have become good. There is still insufficient technician support and information technology in the laboratory remains underdeveloped. The department has shown many productive changes in the past year and more are in train: all this should bode well for raising the standards in the future.

ART AND DESIGN

201. Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is very good.

Strengths:

- Strong, caring relationships.
- Wide variety of creative activities at Key Stage 4 to allow pupils to work to their strengths.
- High expectations at both key stages.
- Very good attainment.

Areas for improvement:

- More ICT provision for the department with design and graphics programs.
- Updating of provision for three dimensional work.
- A light box would enhance the departmental provision.
- Safe exhibition space.
- Closer contact with and information regarding attainment at Key Stage 2 from contributory primary schools.

202. Attainment at both key stages is very good. Most pupils are achieving at or above the national expectation. No information regarding National Curriculum Levels is communicated to the school from primary schools. From observation and scrutiny of work, pupils enter the school with below average standards of attainment. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001, 79 per cent of pupils were at Level 5 and above. This is in line with national expectations and shows that pupils are achieving well given their low starting points. A slightly higher proportion of girls achieve the expected level or above.

203. From the work observed, pupils of all levels of attainment are working successfully and can blend colours with confidence. They have good control of polyprints and create inventive, juxtaposed and repeat patterns accurately. They handle charcoal effectively and are adept at both heavy and lighter shading. Drawings are carefully executed and detail is well observed. Work based on the Impressionists and the Cubist movement is both delicate and bold. The compositions of landscape and portraiture faithfully reflect the styles of the movements being studied. The pupils are equally at home in a variety of media. Work seen covered pastel, watercolour, acrylic, oil based paint and coloured pencil. A group of pupils working on a three dimensional project based on insects were able to manipulate wire successfully to ensure balance and proportion between abdomen, thorax and head in preparation for covering the shapes in papier-mache.

204. At GCSE in 2000, over all art and design subjects 72 per cent achieved grades A*-C. This was significantly higher than the national average. In 2001, 68 per cent achieved A* - C. In both years, girls' results were excellent and higher than those of the boys. Pupils display a very good control of media and are confident in using pastel, pencil, acrylics, watercolour and charcoal. There is some exciting three dimensional work in modrock based on a Surreal stimulus which will, eventually, include elements of natural forms, feathers and dyed materials. Some very good pattern work based on influences from Picasso, Magritte, William Morris and Mackintosh is on display. In ceramics, pupils are able to blend colours well and then paint, delicately and painstakingly, the intricate and complex designs on the Victorian style tiles which they had created earlier. In photography, pupils are able to operate the enlargers accurately and produce very good, clear prints of their still life photography.

205. Amongst the best results are achieved in textiles. At age 14, pupils are able to develop observational drawing into three dimensional collage using tissue, net, wool and accurate machine embroidery. They create delicate, careful hand embroidery and collage based on a stimulus derived from peacock feathers. Pupils are confident in their manipulation of reverse appliqué, based on Klimt paintings, and have produced some experimental weavings based on Impressionist paintings. They are conscious of the use of

pastel shades or bold primary colours to create mood and atmosphere. At GCSE, in 2000, 91 per cent of pupils achieved grades A*-C which was well above national averages and in 2001 the results were similar. There was little significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. These are outstanding results. Pupils are able to produce well balanced collage designs to create primitive images in terracotta, red and orange. They can also produce delicate batik work based on Tiffany glass. There is creative use of appliqué, batik and overlay using material and natural forms. They can skilfully add machine embroidery to finished quilted designs. Work observed in Year 11 ranged from grade C to A*.

206. Teaching at both key stages is generally very good, which promotes high educational standards. Excellent teaching was observed in one lesson. Enthusiastic, well informed teaching and very good teacher pupil relationships encourage enthusiastic and positive responses. Work is marked with care, pupils are always informed of their present level of attainment, targets are set and areas for improvement are indicated. Questioning is skilful and the accurate use of art vocabulary when referring to pupils' work ensures that the pupils develop the ability to describe and evaluate their own work using appropriate phrases and relevant art descriptors. Skilful demonstrations of shading, manipulation of three dimensional materials and highlighting techniques are much appreciated by pupils whose own work is much improved as a result of the experience. Teachers' individual advice to, and high expectations of, pupils ensures the development of skills and progress through the key stages. Pupils' work, used to illustrate points being made in lessons, reassures pupils and encourages them to achieve higher standards. The sensitive, creative feedback to pupils also ensures that they are constructive and sympathetic when evaluating their own work and that of others. Carefully selected material used for stimulus increases pupils' experience of a range of artwork as well as inspiring and informing their own creations.

207. The heads of department of art and textiles provide strong leadership and are committed and enthusiastic. Schemes of work for both key stages are designed to fulfil the requirements of both the National Curriculum and the SEG GCSE syllabus. The marking policy is constructed to communicate information clearly to pupils regarding their attainment at both key stages. Assessment sheets and tracking information are used to inform curricular planning and schemes of work, and are refined and adjusted if appropriate. The department is aware of pupils on the special needs register and strategies are in place to ensure differentiation at both ends of the educational spectrum. There is sensitive assistance from the learning support staff. Regular meetings ensure that the departmental marking policy is consistent and the development plan remains realistic in its target setting. Appraisal and quality assurance of the department are undertaken annually by a senior manager and the heads of department are given cover to appraise staff and offer feedback once a year.

208. The rooms are light and airy and have reasonable display space. However, this large department needs more than one hour's technician support. Capitation needs to be increased to ensure that the head of departments can build up their resources rather than expending the allowance on consumables. The accommodation would benefit from being expanded and more computers would enhance the work of the department. The three dimensional provision is ready for an up-date. More design computer programs would be beneficial for pupils and a safe exhibition space would enhance the school's display policy.

209. Since the last inspection monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum has been more carefully addressed and the quality of teaching has improved.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

210. Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- The enthusiasm and determination of the departmental staff to raise standards across the school.
- Staff expertise in a wide range of materials and processes.
- Work in food technology and graphic products is a developing strength of the department.
- The provision of a class set of laptop computers.

Areas for improvement:

- Greater emphasis should be placed on drawing skills, product evaluation and systems and control within Key Stage 3 and industrial practice and awareness in resistant materials at Key Stage 4.
- The wider use and application of ICT.
- Co-ordination and continuity between material areas at Key Stage 3, with particular reference to end of key stage assessment procedures.
- Provision of design and technology for all pupils at Key Stage 4.

211. At age 14 in June 2001, according to teacher assessment, the majority of pupils achieved Level 5. In comparison to all schools nationally, the number of pupils achieving higher levels is significantly below average. The work observed during the inspection suggests that skills in making are higher than those in designing and, therefore, that teacher assessments are considerably inflated. At GCSE, in 2001, the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades across all design and technology subjects was approximately 35 per cent, although for food technology it was 43 per cent. This compares with a national average of approximately 50 per cent for all schools, but is broadly comparable with results from similar schools. However, currently less than half the year group enter examinations in a design and technology subject.

212. Pupils acquire encouraging levels of practical skills and clearly enjoy this aspect of the work. In Years 10 and 11 they can control tools and manipulate materials with a good degree of accuracy and confidence. They have a good working knowledge of a wide range of tools and materials. Pupils concentrate and apply themselves fully throughout lessons and work at a lively pace. Nearly all pupils behave extremely well during lessons. They listen attentively, respond keenly to questions and co-operate well in sharing tools and materials. One Year 11 food technology class worked well together to participate in a taste testing exercise. Pupils are generally willing and able to explain the activity they have been set. For example, a Year 8 pupil was able to explain fluently why the mechanism for a toy she had did not work, and what she could do to improve it. However, pupils are not sufficiently aware of how to make specific progress in terms of the attainment target in design and technology or of their own standards of achievement. The sample of work seen suggests that while pupils make steady progress through both key stages they rarely experience significant 'leaps' in their learning. Higher attaining pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities to develop personal learning skills and explore problems and issues of particular concern to them.

213. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, frequently good and on occasions very good. In the best lessons, the enthusiasm of the teacher is infectious, there is a clear perception of the learning needs of pupils, and expectations are high. In one lesson, the teacher very effectively used a situation that was familiar to pupils to help them understand the requirements of a design specification. Lessons are all very well organised and managed with appropriate changes of pace and activity. Teachers have good subject knowledge of a wide range of materials and processes. However, opportunities are

sometimes missed to give pupils much clearer indications of specific objectives or targets that will enable them to make incremental steps in their learning in various aspects of the subject. Teachers fail to make sufficient cross-references and connections to pupils' design and technology experiences in other material areas. There is insufficient reference to industrial practice, existing designs and design development processes, particularly in resistant materials and graphic products.

214. Pupils have opportunities to work in resistant materials technology, graphic products and food technology at both key stages. Within these areas a good range of learning experiences are provided and work in ICT is starting to develop. Pupils are expected to use the Internet for research work. A class set of laptops is now available for departmental use. During the inspection a Year 10 class were developing basic skills in using a three dimensional CAD program. However, in Years 7-9, work in electronics, systems and control and products and applications are not sufficiently covered in resistant materials and graphic products at present. While all pupils have the opportunity to take a design and technology course at Key Stage 4, each Year approximately 40 per cent does not do so. This is a breach of statutory requirements that was identified as such in the previous inspection report.

215. A number of projects invite pupils to consider the needs of those belonging to other cultures, and there is scope for this to be developed further. Year 8 pupils 'brainstorm' possible opportunities for making an iced cake for annual celebrations. A Year 9 task involves designing and making a board game with an 'environmental' theme. This is a theme that could also be explored in a wider range of projects. Opportunities to explore the moral, social and spiritual dimensions of design and technology work are missed.

216. Work is regularly marked and commented on. Pupils are fully assessed at the end of each project with basic targets being identified and their marks are collated in a folder for on-going reference. However, written comments fail to provide enough detailed indication of areas for improvement and achievable targets. End of Key Stage 3 assessment procedures need review to provide a more holistic evidence base. A portfolio of exemplar work exists but needs further development to include moderated samples of aspects of the attainment target levels for reference by teachers and pupils.

217. The recently created management team share the potential, enthusiasm and determination to take the subject forward and to raise significantly standards of provision and achievement throughout the school. At present, the heads of resistant materials and food technology do not work closely enough together to plan schemes of work that provide sufficient continuity and progression, or to align and amalgamate assessment procedures. The department handbooks and schemes of work need updating and co-ordinating into one document. Current accommodation and resources are effectively maximised and there is good technician support. Yearly risk assessment and safety checks reveal deficiencies that sometimes necessitate taking equipment that needs adaptation and repair out of use in order to bring it back into full working order. In practice, however, this does not always happen, reducing the range of processes available, to the disadvantage of pupils. General provision for dust extraction is not satisfactory.

218. The previous inspection report identified a wide range of issues, mainly in respect of work in resistant materials. Since then, some progress has been made in improving examination results, introducing more varied teaching and learning strategies and promoting staff teamwork. However, the majority of issues identified remain as areas for improvement. In particular, drawing skills in resistant materials remain poor and improvements in continuity and subject co-ordination have yet to be adequately tackled. Most seriously, the Key Stage 4 curriculum does not meet statutory requirements. The department is starting to improve. Recent changes in the management structure have been introduced in a concerted effort to continue to raise standards.

219. Whilst not a design and technology subject, the department also takes responsibility for child development. There are well-established GCSE courses in child development for pupils at Key Stage 4 and Post 16. In 2001, 27 per cent of pupils entered in Year 11 achieved A*-C grades, and most grades A*-G. This was a drop on previous years, where over a third achieved higher grades, although the groups taking child development in 2001 were of lower ability than in previous years. Lessons observed were very well planned and delivered. Pupils worked hard and demonstrated a good grasp of subject content when responding to questions. There are good contacts with local primary schools and regular visits by mothers and health workers. Pupils have the opportunity to take care of an 'electronic baby'.

GEOGRAPHY

220. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths:

- Good teaching and learning in a majority of lessons.
- Good attitudes and behaviour from most pupils.
- Good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- Good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement:

- Matching learning resources, teaching methods and pupil management more appropriately to lower attaining pupils.
- Developing opportunities for pupils to experience the reality of geography through practical tasks on site, and when possible in other locations.
- Identifying topics that will helpfully allow pupils to use and develop their capabilities in information and communication technology.
- The use of assessment data to evaluate pupils' progress, the curriculum and teaching.

221. By age 14, pupils' attainment is below national expectations, but their achievement over the three years from when they enter the school is satisfactory. Teachers' Key Stage 3 assessments show girls' attainment is above boys' by a greater margin than seen nationally. GCSE performance has steadily improved over the last three years. It remains, as at the time of the previous inspection, well below the national average for all schools, and below the national average for similar schools. However, pupils' performance in 2001 compared with the level of their attainment at age 14 (in 1999) shows satisfactory achievement at age 16. In 2001 GCSE examinations, boys improved their performance significantly, but girls' results dropped by a similar proportion. The improvement overall was below the target set by the school. Inspection evidence supports teachers' assessments, examination results and other statistics that confirm a trend of steady improvement.

222. In both key stages pupils respond positively and sustain good levels of interest in the subject. Their behaviour is invariably good or better. Higher attaining Year 7 pupils, in a lesson on the effects of the 1999 Turkish earthquake, eagerly searched photographs, newspaper reports, and maps to discover its effects. Lower attaining pupils in another Year 7 lesson were shocked by film evidence of the volcanic eruption of Mount St Helens. They gave their impressions of how people might have reacted to this awesome natural event with accuracy and sensitivity. In two isolated lessons, pupils' behaviour was below an acceptable standard because they were not motivated, and lacked the skills to tackle the tasks they were given. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in meeting their personal targets, for example by increasing their vocabulary, improving their reading and writing skills, or by behaving in agreed ways. In a number of lessons they

benefit from the guidance they receive from learning support assistants. For example, the assistants check pupils' understanding of the work so that they can manage independently. They help pupils with organisation, so that homework is recorded, and they note work for pupils who are absent, so they maintain continuity.

223. Pupils express good levels of knowledge about places and geographical facts. Equally, they understand physical processes and how people change landscapes. A Year 8 class, for example, explained how waves shape the coast. They used subject terms, such as *hydraulic action* when air is compressed into fissures in the cliff face, in giving answers and writing accounts. Pupils tend to give very short answers and need prompting to show what they undoubtedly know. This is also true of written work, but they make progress over time. However, weak basic skills of average and lower attaining pupils hinder communication of their geographical understanding. Word lists and writing frames give these pupils support for improving their literacy skills. Higher attaining Year 11 pupils showed they understood the implications of visits of 'green tourists' to the Galapagos Islands by reading a textbook section and making their own notes. Lower attaining pupils had difficulty with reading and copied from the text without full understanding.

224. The quality of teaching is good overall. Six out of ten lessons are good, with a quarter very good in Years 7-9. In two lessons in Year 9, teaching was unsatisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge. This is used well to plan lessons so that knowledge and understanding are progressively built upon. Teachers question pupils closely to assess the level of their learning, and to reinforce and extend it. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, the teacher used a film extract of a volcanic eruption very effectively with a low attaining class. The film was paused within seconds of the start and the teacher asked, 'What does that look like?' A pupil said it looked like a crack in the earth's surface. 'What do we say in geography?' the teacher insisted. In response a pupil said 'the space opening between two plates'. Pupils demonstrated that they were accumulating subject words, and using them accurately. They reinforced their learning by labelling a diagram of a volcano. Pupils acquire geographical skills and knowledge through effective teaching that helps them to understand physical processes well. For example, Year 10 pupils used film evidence, maps, and their learning about rivers to explain why the Mississippi floods of 1993 were so extensive. They responded well to teachers' high expectations by applying their previous learning to this case study. They know, for example, that hydrographs are used to predict flooding, and river courses can be straightened to aid the discharge of water. Their interest in the subject is evident, and they concentrate hard on tasks, such as writing a newspaper article to explain the floods and their effects, which challenges them to use their learning independently. The two unsatisfactory lessons were with Year 9 classes of low attaining pupils, many with special educational needs. The resources in one lesson were not matched appropriately to the reading level of the pupils, were uninspiring, and too complex. Consequently this unsettled class became even more disinterested and noisy. They learned very little as a result. Both lessons contained weaknesses in the management of pupils.

225. Leadership and management of geography are good. The head of department and two other teachers were appointed in September 2001. They joined two teachers with other responsibilities as well as geography teaching. In a relatively short time the head of department has established a coherent team pledged to the raising of standards. They are having a positive impact on pupils' learning, and achievement levels. More appropriate resources have been purchased which raise pupils' interest and motivation. The head of department knows that pupils' learning will be enriched by opportunities to experience geography at first-hand, and that the subject provides many topics where pupils can use and develop their ICT capabilities. A start has been made on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. It is important that good practice is shared so that teachers improve their skills with more demanding pupils. Using assessment information much more will help the department to reflect upon what is succeeding and where further work is needed: for example, why girls' learning in Years 7-9 is so much better than boys' learning.

226. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards have been maintained, but the use of ICT in teaching and learning shows little improvement. Fieldwork features less than it did. Whilst the curriculum is sound, the development of a more practical approach including regular fieldwork is essential. Use of assessment remains an area for improvement. The current head of department is the third appointment since the last inspection.

HISTORY

227. Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths:

- Leadership of the head of department and the commitment of new staff to raising the profile of history within the school.
- Good teaching, leading to good learning by many pupils.
- The implementation of better assessment procedures and initiatives such as a strategy for improving literacy.
- Rising standards in history, particularly in Year 10.

Areas for improvement:

- Improving the overall consistency of teaching within the department.
- Improving extra-curricular provision in history.
- Improving accommodation for history.

228. The 2001 teacher assessments in history for pupils in Year 9 showed that the proportion attaining Level 5 or above was slightly below expectations for similarly aged pupils nationally, with girls achieving better than boys at the higher levels. There has been no consistent trend in results, since the standards achieved in 2001 were slightly below those of 2000 but above those achieved in 1999. The inspection confirmed that standards in knowledge, understanding and the development of historical skills are below national expectations, with girls achieving better than boys overall, but with relatively few pupils achieving the higher levels. These standards represent good achievement for the majority of pupils, since they come into Year 7 with knowledge and skills in history well below expectations. Between the ages of eleven and fourteen, pupils develop a good understanding of chronology and the reasons for the Norman victory in 1066. They learn to use historical terminology such as 'contemporary' more accurately. By the age of fourteen, pupils make good progress in developing a more sophisticated understanding of concepts, such as causation: for example, when learning about the English Civil War, pupils learn to distinguish between religious, political and financial causes. Pupils in Year 9 studying the First World War learn to interpret a range of sources more effectively, and also compile extended projects on various aspects of the War such as propaganda and trench warfare.

229. The proportion of pupils in Year 11 achieving an A*-C grade in the 2001 GCSE examinations was close to the national average, and was considerably above the proportions achieved in 1999 and 2000, when results were well below the national average. However, the pupils entered for the 2001 examination were a very small group of higher attaining girls and the entry pattern was not representative of previous years. The inspection confirmed that standards of pupils in Year 11 are below national expectations in knowledge, understanding and the skills of source analysis and evaluation, although the standards of the current Year 10 are much higher and are in line with national expectations. The standards of the current Year 11 represent satisfactory achievement for most pupils in relation to their prior attainment, although girls achieve better than boys. Pupils develop satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the origins of the Cold War and the

superpower confrontations between the USA and the USSR as they developed in crises, such as Berlin and Cuba. Pupils also learn to empathise with varying interpretations of events, although lower achievers make slower progress in developing the ability to analyse historical evidence effectively for its reliability and usefulness.

230. Although average and higher attainers make mostly good progress in learning between the ages of 11 and 14, and satisfactory progress between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, pupils with special educational needs at all ages make more variable progress in developing historical skills. When in large, lower set classes with limited or no specialist support, their progress is sometimes restricted by poor literacy skills. This detracts from their ability to discuss issues or to express themselves accurately in written work, as seen for example when they tackle lengthy studies on interpretations of the Cold War.

231. The overall quality of teaching in history is good, leading to good learning for most pupils. For pupils by the age of fourteen, the teaching is satisfactory or better in nine out of ten lessons, and is good or better in seven out of ten. For pupils by the age of sixteen, the teaching is never less than satisfactory, and is good or better in five out of six lessons. Where the teaching is very effective, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and they exercise very good classroom control and time management which succeeds in keeping pupils very focused throughout lessons. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on medieval castles, the teacher set brief time targets for pupils to complete exercises examining the advantages and disadvantages of early fortifications. Several changes of emphasis during this lesson kept lower achieving pupils very focused on the objectives and they made good gains in understanding. In some of the best lessons, teachers use resources and strategies that keep pupils, either individually or in pairs, actively involved in developing historical understanding of key events. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on the English Civil War, the teacher used video effectively to stimulate pupils' appreciation of different viewpoints on the king's trial and execution. In GCSE lessons on the Cuban missile crisis, teachers use a range of sources to enable pupils to consider the crisis from the different viewpoints of the main protagonists. Pupils are then given the task of predicting outcomes of the crisis, so enabling them to empathise better with political leaders facing difficult choices. Pupils respond well to these opportunities and concentrate well, thereby increasing their understanding. Another feature of good lessons is the good assessment and feedback, which teachers give to pupils. Teachers give clear indications of the National Curriculum Levels pupils have achieved and how they can progress to the next level or grade. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, in which pupils were examining the impact of the First World War on women's lives, they were told how they could improve their performance by using evidence to substantiate their assertions. Pupils' attitudes are very positive in most lessons: there are good relationships with teachers, pupils are motivated to try hard, and they take pride in their work, although lower achievers work slowly.

232. In the small minority of lessons which are unsatisfactory or less effective, teachers have inadequate strategies for dealing with disruptive pupils, and this restricts learning. Very occasionally teachers do not have high enough expectations and the work set is poorly matched to the needs of pupils. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on trench warfare, all pupils, including higher achievers, were given too many low-level comprehension tasks, which could not effectively increase their understanding of the significance of this method of fighting.

233. Leadership and management in history are very good. In a short space of time, the new head of department has got a group of recently appointed teachers to gel together well and raise the profile of history. Assessment procedures have been improved and are being increasingly used to set targets for pupils to improve their work. The use of ICT in history is being increased, for example as a means of investigating databases and of doing historical research. However, there are currently few visits or extracurricular activities to enrich the history curriculum. There is now more monitoring of teaching, and initiatives such as a drive to improve standards of literacy are beginning to have a positive effect on raising standards.

Non-specialists do some history teaching, and this causes some inconsistencies in approach, and makes the subject more difficult to co-ordinate. Also the teaching of history takes place in rooms in different parts of the school, thus reducing the cohesion of the department.

234. At the time of the previous inspection, attainment in history was in line with national expectations for all schools, which is no longer the case, although pupils continue to make satisfactory or good progress in learning. The quality of teaching remains good overall. The quality of leadership and management and of resources has improved, although accommodation has not improved significantly. Overall, given the concerted drive now taking place to raise standards and the profile of the subject, in what is effectively a new department, there has been good progress in history since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

235. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory, with some good features.

Strengths:

- Very good subject knowledge of the teachers.
- Good start made to the GNVQ course in Year 10.
- The use of ICT by mathematics, business studies and modern languages.

Areas for improvement:

- The Key Stage 3 portfolio of pupils' work to demonstrate the standard of different National Curriculum Levels.
- The use of ICT by those subjects that do not yet meet statutory requirements.
- Sharing good practice in teaching within the department.

236 In 2001, the teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 was well above the average for all schools. A commercial test was used to give an indicator of the National Curriculum Levels pupils had reached and this confirmed the teacher assessment. However, the standards of the current Year 9 pupils are below national expectations. GCSE results have fallen over the last three years and in 2001 the results were very low in comparison with both all schools and modern schools nationally. The reasons that the school has identified for this are that pupils' coursework was not effectively structured, some of the teaching was unsatisfactory and some pupils were entered for the wrong level of examination paper. The standards of the current Year 11 pupils are higher but are still well below average. A new GNVQ examination course was introduced for Year 10 pupils last September, and the standards achieved by the pupils so far match the expectations of the course.

237. The standards of the current Year 9 pupils are below national expectations. Pupils change the variables in a simple spreadsheet model, control the cursor on the screen to create simple patterns, extract information from the Internet and CD-ROMs, combine text and graphics, create a database of names and addresses, and model electrical circuits and an electro-mechanical system. However, there is insufficient use of ICT to measure, control, and exchange information. Pupils' achievements during Years 7-9 are always at least satisfactory and often good. Pupils with special educational needs usually achieve standards similar to other pupils. For example, in a Year 7 class all pupils, including those with special needs, successfully completed an information sheet for history on the Magna Carta adding graphics and boxes around the text. In two lessons for higher-attaining pupils, they achieved well. In one, Year 8 pupils used their ICT skills imaginatively to design web pages and, in another, Year 9 pupils designed and produced a small database quickly.

238. For the new GNVQ course that has just started in Year 10, standards match the expectations of the course. For example, average and below average pupils produced and annotated six types of different documents to show how they meet specific criteria. They combine text and graphics effectively and apply design principles to their work. The pupils have much recorded work of the expected quality, although sometimes this is spoilt by weaknesses in literacy. Above-average pupils have constructed a relational database. So far in this course, there has been good achievement by the full range of attainment, including pupils with special educational needs.

239. The standards in Year 11 have risen compared to those achieved last summer because the teaching of coursework has improved and pupils have attended extra lessons out of school time. Where pupils' coursework matches the expected standard, they create databases for different purposes, such as to improve the efficiency of a toyshop or insurance office, and have clearly structured, complete work. However, a significant amount of work is below expected standards and lacks the necessary detail, accuracy and explicit evaluation. Pupils' class work is often not developed in the expected detail and some is incomplete. Their achievement ranges from good to unsatisfactory, reflecting the quality of teaching.

240. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some significant strengths. The teaching and learning in lessons ranged from very good to unsatisfactory. The teaching has a number of common strengths. Teachers have very good subject knowledge so they give clear explanations and help pupils to overcome any learning difficulties and take their learning forwards. For example, they give clear step-by-step instructions about how to mail merge, and they use and explain technical vocabulary clearly. There are clear demonstrations at the start of lessons using a data projector and these help pupils to clearly understand how to achieve the task. Teachers and learning support assistants work tirelessly to monitor and support the learning of individuals including those with special educational needs. Classroom management is usually always effective and secures good behaviour. Sometimes, however, there are weaknesses in the ability of a significant minority of pupils to sustain their concentration or to use their initiative in following instructions.

241. Some weaknesses were found in several lessons. Learning objectives were not explicitly shared with the pupils at the start of the lesson or used to review pupils' learning at the end. The marking of work is very effective in the GNVQ course in giving pupils clear guidance about how to improve their work but this is not consistently done on other courses. Teachers do not have a system for the recording of ongoing assessments so that this information can be used to inform the planning of pupils' next steps of learning. Lesson planning was excellent for the week of the inspection but the regular lesson planning does not show how work is matched to pupils' differing levels of attainment.

242. Teaching and learning were good in Years 7-9 and for the GNVQ course. In a Year 8 lesson where teaching and learning were very good, classroom routines were well established and pupils quickly moved their chairs so they could see the demonstration. The teacher's high expectations and very good relationships secured an excellent response from pupils who were challenged to achieve the learning objectives. The very effective monitoring and support enabled individual pupils to solve their own problems. Those who completed the main task were set an extension activity that involved research using the Internet. The teaching is better for the GNVQ course than the GCSE course because the expectations of teachers and pupils are higher, and there is ongoing effective feedback to pupils that helps them improve their standards.

243. The schemes of work for the different courses do not always give teachers guidance on matching work to pupils' differing levels of attainment. The schemes include reference to literacy and include key words for pupils. These are shown in word banks displayed in classrooms although the display of key words could provide a sharper focal point for pupils.

Work in ICT on databases and spreadsheets enables pupils to apply their numeracy skills. For Key Stage 3, there are large portfolios of pupils' work to demonstrate standards at different National Curriculum Levels but these would benefit from the selection of a sample of pieces of work that are then annotated to explain why they meet the assessment criteria for a particular level. There is a good system for monitoring the work of the ICT department each year, and the department has a well structured development plan to remedy the weaknesses identified by last year's monitoring. Two technicians provide important support to the provision of ICT across the school.

244. The school has established its own intranet and a start has been made to providing learning resources that pupils can access from school. Some good resources have been provided by a few subjects, including business studies, art and design and technology. The details of the GNVQ ICT course and resources are available, and links are made to revision sites on the Internet. A good start has been made to this learning resource but much needs to be done.

245. The school has strengthened the management of the use of ICT by all subjects, and a new co-ordinator was appointed at the start of this term. A new audit of the use of ICT by each subject is being carried out. The improvement of the use of ICT across the curriculum is a target in the school improvement plan and some aspects of the plan are ahead of the scheduled timescales. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively by some subjects, and meets statutory requirements. For example, in mathematics the well-planned use of ICT improves pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding. The use of ICT is integrated into scheme of work for modern languages and pupils complete a good range of work with ICT across all years. In business studies, pupils show independence in working effectively with ICT to support their learning. However, there are gaps in provision where statutory requirements are not met. For example, control work in design and technology is not yet covered for all pupils although the equipment and software have recently been purchased by the school. Data logging in science is not yet taught to all pupils as the equipment has only recently been purchased.

246. Since the last inspection, good improvements have been made to the number and quality of computers. The quality of teaching and learning is similar to that reported five years ago. Satisfactory improvements have been made to the use of ICT by other subjects, but further improvements are needed to ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

247. Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is good.

Strengths:

- Relationships in lessons are good.
- The progress made by pupils in relation to their ability is good.
- The monitoring and recording of pupil's achievement and progress is very good.
- The management of the department is very good.
- The results in the 2000 teacher assessments were above average for all schools.
- There is very good team work within the department.
- The resources produced by the department are of high quality and are helping to raise standards.
- The use of ICT helps raise standards.

Areas for improvement:

- Too much English is used as the normal means of classroom communication in a few lessons.
- In a few lessons expectations and standards, especially in speaking and listening, are very low.
- No pupils continue with modern languages at A Level Post 16.
- No pupils take two modern foreign languages and too few take a full or short course GCSE in a language.

248. The results in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were well above average for all schools. In 2000, 67 per cent of all pupils achieved Level 4 or higher. In 2001, the figure was 49 per cent, which was just below national expectations for all schools. Girls achieve considerably higher standards than boys. In many French lessons during the inspection, pupils demonstrated standards in line with national expectations and these standards were confirmed from a scrutiny of pupils' written work.

249. About one third of the cohort now opt for a GCSE language course, although in 2000 and 2001 entries were less than a quarter of the cohort. Results in French GCSE in 2000 were just above national expectations for all schools and well above average for similar schools, but from a much smaller than average proportion of the year group. In 2001, 45 per cent of pupils attained A*-C which is below average for all schools but well above average for similar schools nationally. In 2000, a small entry for Spanish achieved lower than average results compared to all schools nationally, but achieved in line with expectations. In the Certificate of Achievement in both French and Spanish, in 2001, all pupils passed and over 75 per cent of pupils gained a merit or distinction. This is a considerable achievement since they only have one lesson a week. In 2001, 4 pupils obtained C grades on the GCSE short course which is also laudable since they also only had one lesson a week.

250. The performance of boys in 2000 and 2001 was lower than that of the girls. The attainment of pupils in GCSE French lessons during the inspection was either in line with national expectations or above average. Results in French have improved since the last inspection. The evidence, from a scrutiny of pupils' written work and the lessons observed of the GCSE sets, confirmed that many Year 11 pupils' attainment in French is now average. The scrutiny of work in GCSE French also confirmed that pupils' attainment is average. At Key Stage 4 pupils generally have good achievement in relationship to their ability in French. Many pupils achieve well in listening. In one Year 11 set of very low attainers, including a large number of pupils with special educational needs, pupils coped

well with a lesson conducted mainly in French and were also able to understand details from a challenging recorded text in French delivered at normal speed. In a GCSE set in French in Year 10, pupils understood details in an extended recording of people booking into a campsite and were able to report back orally with confidence.

251. Some pupils' speaking skills are also well developed. At the end of Year 11, the higher attaining pupils in French can use present, future and past tenses, state opinions and give reasons with reasonable accuracy. Most pupils in French have good pronunciation and intonation. In writing, lower attaining pupils label pictures, write sentences and short descriptive paragraphs. Higher attaining pupils can use simple subordinate clauses and some basic tenses in defined situations. Their work is accurate and frequently redrafted using ICT. In the Spanish Certificate of Achievement groups, pupils can understand very simple instructions, pick out details from short easy listening texts, answer simple questions and pronounce words and phrases fairly accurately. Writing in Spanish consists mainly of labelling and copy writing. Pupils read sentences and very short Spanish texts consisting of simple familiar language. Modern languages contribute well to pupils' general literacy because of the emphasis on correct spelling and the development of greater grammatical awareness as pupils' progress in their learning.

252. Pupils' achievement in French in Years 7-9 is good. They make good progress in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening skills are well developed. In several Year 7 classes pupils understood lessons conducted entirely in carefully selected French when supported by clear mime and gesture. In most Year 8 and 9 classes, pupils coped well with lessons delivered in French spoken at normal speed. Most pupils were also capable of picking out some of the main details in cassette recordings. One Year 7 class successfully identified the number of classroom objects mentioned in a recorded text. Most pupils repeat words and phrases, chorally and individually, with good pronunciation and intonation. Many pupils reply confidently with good accents to questions in French and practise short dialogues in pairs. Occasionally pupils use the language spontaneously to make simple requests in French. They asked for paper, a pen, a new exercise book and for permission to take off their jackets. Reading skills are satisfactory. Many lessons begin with silent reading of graded readers of pupils' own choice. Pupils do a brief review of all books they read in French. In several lessons pupils read out loud with confidence and some used dictionaries or glossaries to look up the meaning of unknown words. Many pupils make good progress in their writing skills through Key Stage 3. By Year 9, some pupils have good basic writing skills and higher and average pupils write, with the aid of models or writing frames, short texts containing present and past tenses. Some can express simple opinions and give reasons. Some pupils are beginning to have an awareness of basic grammatical patterns, for example gender, adjective agreement, prepositions and the conjugation of some common verbs.

253. The teaching of French was generally sound or better in Years 7-11. It was good or better in over two thirds of all lessons. In several lessons it was very good and excellent in two. In two lessons, in Years 7-9, teaching was unsatisfactory. The teaching of French Post 16 is good. The teaching of Spanish is sound in Years 10 and 11. Teachers use the foreign language extensively, except when presenting grammar, to the great benefit of pupils' listening skills. In a few lessons in French too much English is used and consequently pupils' listening skills are not sufficiently challenged. All lessons are very well prepared and nearly always delivered enthusiastically and at a brisk pace, with very good use of home-produced resources, which motivate pupils to achieve of their best in all four skills. Effective use is made of deadlines to motivate pupils and keep them on target. In several lessons seen a stopwatch was also used to time activities. This greatly motivated pupils to perform quickly! The content of most lessons is carefully graded and matched to the needs and interests of pupils, with frequent change of task and good coverage of the four skills. This ensures that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make appropriate progress. In one Year 7 lesson, with pupils from the Dyslexia Provision, pupils made excellent progress in all four skills as a result of skilful planning and excellent delivery. There

is generally a productive atmosphere in lessons, and effective teaching combined with good motivation, enables most pupils to progress well. The very best lessons are delivered with skill and enthusiasm and consist of a wide variety of linked activities using the overhead projector, cassette recorder and resource sheets. This results in pupils responding with enthusiasm. In one Year 8 lesson very low attainers, including largely pupils with special educational needs, achieved very high attainment in relation to their abilities and were able to talk about the weather fluently and understand a simple weather forecast. Very occasionally the pace is very slow, there is insufficient challenge and too much use of English, which results in underachievement for all pupils, especially in listening and speaking.

254. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally very good in both languages. Most pupils are very enthusiastic language learners, eager to demonstrate their skills. In several classes they were fully engaged by language games and communicative activities. They were enthusiastic about playing noughts and crosses, bingo and 'find the missing item' in French. Many pupils show good levels of concentration and contribute fully to all lesson activities, settle down to work quickly and remain on task.

255. The numerous visits and exchanges to France combined with the e-mail link to a French school ensure that the department makes a strong contribution to the cultural development of some pupils and also enhances their linguistic skills. The department benefits from very good leadership, which has helped to raise standards of teaching and improve learning. The language teachers work very well together. Four of the teachers are native speakers of French. Documentation is excellent. Assessment policies and procedures are very good and ensure that pupils' progress is monitored very effectively. Teachers and most pupils are clear about National Curriculum Levels and GCSE grades, which helps them to progress well. The department contributes successfully to the vocational key skills course Post 16 by preparing students to teach French in local primary schools. An excellent example of this was observed during the inspection.

256. The improvement since the last inspection has been good. The teacher assessments in Key Stage 3 have increased significantly and are now above the national average. The quality of teaching has improved. The learning of many pupils is significantly better and attainment in all four skills is higher. However, too few pupils carry on their language learning to GCSE in Key Stage 4.

MUSIC

257. Overall, the quality of provision in music is good.

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching.
- The provision of extra curricular music.
- The good quality of singing.
- The management of the subject.

Areas for improvement:

- To develop pupils composition skills.
- Develop the use of ICT to support pupil's composition.
- To address the time allocated for the subject.

258. Teachers' assessment of 14-year-olds in 2001 showed that standards were above the national average. These results are inflated and did not assess in sufficient detail the composition element of the National Curriculum. The results of the 2001 GCSE examination at grades A*-C were average when compared with similar schools nationally but below average for pupils attaining the A*-G grade. Whilst a higher proportion of boys achieve grades A*-C, the highest grades were achieved by girls. These results are lower than the three previous years, when results had been at, or above, the national average for all schools. Three students were entered for the 2001 A Level examination, two achieved grades and one was un-graded.

259. Pupil's previous musical experience is limited. Few have had the opportunities to compose music or develop their creative skills. However, they make good progress through Years 7-9 and by the time they reach the age of 14 their attainment is at the level expected. Pupils have good rhythmic skills. This was most noticeable in a Year 7 rhythm lesson. Here pupils successfully maintained an independent rhythm during an ensemble performance using untuned percussion instruments. These good skills are contributing to their performance skills that are well established. Pupils play simple melodies on the keyboard, either for memory or reading formal notation maintaining a steady pulse. Pupils have knowledge of the construction of a primary chord and play chord sequences with understanding. Listening and appraising skills are satisfactory but pupils' use of the appropriate vocabulary when describing the music they have listened to is limited. Composition skills are not as good as they should be. Pupils lack the necessary basic skills to develop their creative work. They are able to describe the structure of a composition but few use this knowledge in their creative work. These weaknesses are now being addressed with the revised schemes of work that now place a greater emphasis on the composition and listening element of the National Curriculum. Although as yet not fully developed there are signs of improvement with pupils beginning to use basic composition techniques. This was noticeable in a Year 8 composition on 'emotions'. Here pupils used their knowledge of chords and note clusters to successfully produce a short composition to represent a peaceful scene.

260. Attainment by the age of 16 is at the level expected for the small group of pupils who continue music in Key Stage 4. Pupils' performance skills are further developed, confidently performing on a range of instruments in varying styles. Pupils have listened to a range of different musical styles. They are able to name the different periods of music, accurately identify the main elements of the music and explain the impact that the development of musical instruments has had on different styles of music. The creative element of the examination is not so well developed as performance. The majority of pupils have produced several short compositions but these are of a basic level, lacking style and structure. There is, however, an improvement with recent compositions with pupils beginning to have a clearer understanding of the development and structure of a composition. The use of ICT to support the development of composition is unsatisfactory. The school is aware of this weakness and is in the process of converting two adjoining practise rooms into a recording studio; this is in the early stages of development. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and benefit by being linked with more confident pupils and the good support provided by a learning assistant who is a competent instrumentalist. The level of attainment has been maintained since the previous inspection.

261. The extra curricular provision of the school is very good and is contributing well to pupils' musical development. The wide range of activities is well supported by pupils who comment favourably about the ensembles and that they are proud to be part of them. The standard of the two school choirs is of high quality. Pupils perform with enthusiasm in a variety of musical styles, confidently maintaining good pitch when singing in harmony. The overall quality of teaching is good; no unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. In all lessons the very good relationships and the enthusiastic teaching contributes well to pupils' positive attitude to the subject and is promoting good learning.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their expertise well to demonstrate skills to pupils. An example of this was when a teacher was explaining the homework to a Year 11 group. Here, the teacher effectively used instrumental expertise to demonstrate to pupils how to link a series of musical phrases into an extended performance. Pupils responded well to this and had clear understanding of the requirements of the homework. This subject knowledge was also used well by the teacher during a Year 9 lesson, demonstrating the chord sequence for a Blues topic. The outcome of this was that pupils had a clear understanding of the sequence and were eager and confident to perform. Pupils responded well during the performance session, listening attentively, applauding performances and making sensible comments on how they could be improved leading to progress with their appraising skills. Teachers have good discipline, insisting on quiet when explaining the task and contributing well to the pace of lessons. A particular quality of the teaching is the good relationships that teachers have with their pupils. The outcome of these good relationships is that pupils feel confident to seek help when required, contributing well to their progress and learning.

262. Although teachers plan lessons well, there are occasions when the time spent on the main focus of the lesson is too brief for pupils to refine and consolidate their practical work. A contributory reason for this is the below average time allocated for the subject. This is not helped by pupils' late arrival to lessons, mainly due to the distance that they need to travel from one lesson to another. The outcome of this is that some lessons start late and learning is slowed. This was an issue at the previous inspection and has not been addressed. Progress is also slowed when the noise level in the classroom during practical sessions is excessive, resulting in pupils unable to hear or refine their work. The very good extra curricular provision provides a range of opportunities for talented pupils who make good progress. The quality of teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection. The leadership of the subject is very good. Management responsibilities are divided between two colleagues. Both work hard, complement each other's strengths and provide a range of musical experiences for pupils that are contributing to their progress. The department has clear targets for improvement and with the recently revised schemes of work and clearer assessment procedures the subject is well placed for future developments.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

263. Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- The quality of some of the teaching.
- The positive relationships between staff and pupils.
- Good provision for the range of activities after school.

Areas for improvement:

- The setting of targets for improvement in lessons for individual pupils and for pupils to be involved in assessing their progress.
- Indoor accommodation, in particular the lack of a sports hall.

264. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments in 2001 and evidence from lesson observation indicate standards that conform to the national average. The attainment of the majority of pupils conforms to the national average in most areas of the physical education curriculum, and many pupils are able to apply the techniques, skills and competition rules to several aspects of the curriculum, including basketball, netball, dance, hockey and gymnastics. In basketball, pupils have sound control and handling skills and some awareness of the importance of making space to receive the ball. In gymnastics, all pupils are able to execute simple balance and roll movements and combine them into a sequence

of movements and are beginning to develop an understanding of the concept of quality of movement and illustrate this through some of their performances. A significant minority of higher attaining pupils are able to execute more complex movements and are beginning to use very effective linking movements to develop good sequences. Similarly in dance, pupils are beginning to appreciate the importance of the quality of movement and, in addition, are able to interpret music and the phrasing of the music and incorporate this into basic floor patterns. The ability of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 to observe and analyse performance is still developing but where it does occur it is contributing to their improvement in performance.

265. GCSE results for 2001 were below the national average for A* - C grades although they were above the average grades for the rest of the school. The proportion achieving grades A*-C dropped slightly from that of 2000. Overall the practical skills for those pupils in GCSE groups conform to the national average, although a significant minority are well above the average. Attainment overall for other pupils by age 16 conforms to the national average.

266. Pupils in a Year 11 GCSE practical lesson on football had good passing and shooting skills together with a good understanding of many of the rules. They also have good tactical awareness, which they are able to successfully apply to the game situation. In a Year 10 hockey lesson, pupils displayed sound passing and basic stick skills with a significant minority being very good. All pupils have good tactical awareness and most are able to apply this successfully to the game situation. In a Year 11 GCSE theory lesson, pupils had a good understanding of different training methods and their specific use for particular aspects of fitness.

267. Overall, the achievement of pupils in Years 7-9 is satisfactory, although there were several lessons seen where it was good or very good. In a very good dance lesson, pupils were encouraged to develop not only skills but also some understanding of what constitutes quality of movement and to incorporate this into their work developing floor patterns and creating their own movements to express ideas created in groups. In one very good lesson on gymnastics, the pupils developed complex balance positions and were able to incorporate these into a coherent and fairly fluent sequence of movements. They were also able to analyse these sequences successfully and effect some improvement through this analysis. In Years 10 and 11, progress and learning overall is sound, although in Year 11 GCSE practical and theory lessons it is good. In the practical lesson seen, pupils were able to develop basic shooting skills, refine them, and under pressure apply them in a game situation. In the theory lesson, pupils were able to use their understanding of the use of specific exercise to develop aspects of fitness and use this to develop skills of both analysis and planning. In a Year 12 AS Level sports studies lesson, students were able to apply a developing understanding of the theories of learning to a specific coaching situation. In several lessons in Years 7-11, the progress of higher attaining pupils is unsatisfactory. Non-participants are not consistently engaged in all lessons although there were several examples of very good practice. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, and fixtures with other schools, where there are many opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills. Many pupils have achieved representative honours in a range of sports. All of this is recognised by the school by awarding pupils 'colours' when they reach a certain standard or have represented the school consistently over an extended period of time.

268. Pupils' attitudes to learning are usually good at both key stages. Many are enthusiastic, well behaved, and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are generally attentive and are able to sustain concentration throughout the lesson. However, when this is not the case, these pupils have a very negative effect on a minority of lessons. Pupils arrive at lessons with very different perceptions of what will be expected of them depending on the staff who teach them and their expectations and this is often reflected both by their response and by the progress that is made by them. However, relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are usually positive and this is a significant factor in the progress made in many lessons. Opportunities for pupils to work

independently in all year groups are still developing although very good examples were seen in both dance and gymnastics. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to undertake different roles such as coach or official are also still developing.

269. The quality of teaching is sound overall at both key stages, but was good in nearly 50 per cent of Key Stage 4 lessons seen. It was unsatisfactory in nearly 25 per cent of lessons seen at Key Stage 3 but was also very good in nearly 25 per cent of lessons at this key stage. In these very good lessons, a secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good teacher directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning is also a feature of these lessons and discipline and class management is good. In those lessons that were unsatisfactory, planning was not specific or detailed enough, organisation was poor, pupils were uncooperative and the range and type of activities was not appropriate, particularly with respect to extending the higher attaining pupils. Assessment of performance during lessons by teachers is regularly used to enhance teaching and learning, although evaluation by pupils is still developing and is not consistently applied. The recording of assessment using specific criteria linked to schemes of work and involving pupils to set their own targets is not being used. The assessment of GCSE theory work is providing useful information for pupils to improve but, in GCE AS Level theory work, it is not providing the appropriate information for pupils to make the necessary improvements.

270. Although the curriculum meets statutory requirements at both key stages, the time allocated is tight to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. This problem is compounded by the fact that many physical education lessons are in single periods and that pupils are often late to lessons, which is not surprising on such a large site. Timetabling constraints often result in a lack of continuity in the composition of groups, which affects both continuity and progression in learning. The balance of activities, apart from the inclusion of netball for Year 9 boys for a significant amount of time, is generally appropriate at Key Stage 3. There is a satisfactory range of activities at Key Stage 4, although the time allocated does not allow for appropriate depth to provide a good preparation for Post 16 leisure activities. There are no opportunities in the curriculum for most students in the Sixth Form to participate in sports activities. Schemes of work are reasonable working documents although they do not provide specific guidance on developing the potential of the more able pupils or sufficient emphasis or information on developing evaluation or planning skills. There is insufficient emphasis in many lessons on the importance of health related fitness and insufficient time to develop levels of fitness.

271. The day-to-day organisation of the department is good and long term planning provides a reasonably clear educational direction for the department for the next few years. All members of the department are committed, most are very generous with their time and are good role models. They all have specific responsibilities and most give good support to the head of department. The departmental handbook clearly identifies most policies and procedures and the department has appropriate and clearly identified targets. The head of department does monitor the teaching and learning in the department but there is no opportunity for the department to share good practice and for this to affect the overall quality of teaching in different activities. Although outdoor facilities are good, indoor accommodation is unsatisfactory and restricts both balance and choice in the curriculum as well as the quality of some outcomes. A sports hall is needed if the curriculum is to be adequately and fully delivered. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory although there is still some way to go. Clear learning objectives are now identified in schemes of work although extension activities are still not identified in enough detail. Assessment procedures are more informative and are related to National Curriculum Levels but do not yet involve pupils and are not linked to individual pupil target setting. Strategic planning in the department has improved considerably, although opportunities for the department to share organisational strategies and methodology in teaching are still very limited. Teaching time is still too short

and some health and safety issues relating to the gym floor have still not been resolved.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

272. Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is unsatisfactory.

Strengths:

- Commitment of staff.
- Relationships with pupils of all abilities.
- Opportunities provided to explore religious and moral issues.

Areas for improvement:

- Ensuring provision can fulfil the statutory requirements of the Kent Agreed Syllabus for religious education.
- Provision for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Increasing the range of teaching and learning methods.

273. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is below the expectations of the Kent Agreed Syllabus, but achievement is satisfactory given the ability of pupils on entry to the school. The higher attaining pupils have a satisfactory understanding of some Christian beliefs and practices and have gained a basic knowledge of aspects of Islam and Judaism in their historical and present day contexts. Pupils of lower attainment and those with special educational needs do not make the same gains in their knowledge and understanding. The ability of all pupils to express their own views on the teachings and practices of Christianity, Islam and Judaism is far stronger than the ability to combine it with reasoned evidence drawn from their knowledge and understanding of these religions.

274. Whilst teaching in Years 7-9 is satisfactory, there are, however, elements of teaching which do not ensure all pupils make sufficient progress. An emphasis on a teacher-centred approach, without sufficient use of appropriate resources and activities was the norm in four-fifths of lessons observed. This is not always enabling lower attaining pupils to make progress in their learning. Although individual lessons are well structured, the focus of learning is frequently directed towards pupils expressing their own views about generic learning from a particular religious practice before they fully grasp the meaning and significance of the practice for the people who belong to the religion. This is not ensuring pupils reach the expected Agreed Syllabus levels of attainment. An effective lesson with a low attaining Year 7 group looking at baptism, however, combined the pupils' experiences of a recent visit to the local Anglican and Baptist churches with use of artefacts and personal photographs of a baptism. In this lesson, the pupils were able to make connections between the practice of Anglicans and Baptists and their beliefs about baptism.

275. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils pursue the syllabus of a religious education GCSE short course with, in general, the most able sitting the examination. Pupils not being entered for the GCSE examination sit the department's internal certificate. As from September 2001, the department has introduced AQA Entry Level Certificate in Religious Education, which provides a qualification for students unlikely to achieve the higher grades at GCSE. This external certificate will replace the department's internal certificate and ensure all pupils are able to receive an externally validated award. Results in 2000, show that all pupils who were entered achieved a grade A*-G in the GCSE short course, with 68 per cent achieving A* - C grades, well above the national average. Overall the attainment of pupils in the GCSE short course was well above the national average, but was only taken by the ablest pupils, and in the certificate course it was in line with expectations. These results reflected an improvement in the school's performance from the previous two years. However, the performance in the 2001 short course shows only 28 per cent of pupils entered achieving A* - C grades and 95 per cent A* - G grades. The work seen during the inspection indicates

attainment for the higher attainers is currently below the expected levels for the higher grades of the GCSE short course.

276. Higher attaining pupils following the GCSE short course in Year 10 showed a good understanding of a Christian perspective on natural and man-made suffering. Higher attaining pupils can adequately express their own views, both orally and in written form, but many lower attaining pupils, in both the short and certificate courses, only record basic information and do not always articulate their views in any sophisticated way. Year 11 pupils demonstrated good understanding of the parable of the 'Rich Fool' and ability to apply its teaching to present day issues of wealth and poverty. In Year 10 lessons there was good use of a present day example of innocent suffering to illustrate Christian perspectives on this issue. The aims of the lesson were shared with students and there was a greater attempt to involve pupils of all abilities in the learning. Teaching is good overall in Years 10 and 11.

277. Good learning occurred in two-thirds of the lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory learning in two-thirds of lessons seen in Years 7-9. In the majority of lessons observed there were elements of the teacher's planning which did not take account of the learning needs of the wide range of pupils being taught. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs in four fifths of lessons depended on in-class support, either from the teacher or a learning support assistant, to complete the same tasks given to the higher attaining.

278. Pupil attitudes are satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching is good, pupils listen well and sustain concentration throughout. Where there is a lack of appropriate provision for their learning needs there are frequent lapses of concentration and a lack of motivation and interest. The higher attaining pupils are the ones who mainly participate in, and benefit from, discussion, despite the emphasis given by the department to this methodology.

279. The subject is allocated one period per week, which is equivalent to 3.3 per cent of curriculum time. The Kent Agreed Syllabus recommends a 5 per cent time allocation for the content to be covered at Key Stages 3 and 4. One of the factors affecting pupils' attainment and the raising of standards is the lack of coverage of the statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 in either depth or breadth. Pupils' experience little use of ICT or homework, and contact with written and visual resources was limited in lessons observed. Marking is good and the assessment of pupils' work is appropriately measured against the Agreed Syllabus level descriptors, but there is no effective use of assessment in planning for the learning of different abilities. Strengths of the department are the commitment of the staff and the relationships, which they develop with pupils of all abilities. Visits to local churches and the use of members of the local religious communities for 'culture week' and in the teaching of aspects of world religions has benefited the pupils' wider learning in the spiritual, social and cultural dimensions.

280. Since the last inspection, the school has met the requirements for provision of religious education in the Sixth Form and improved the opportunities for all pupils to gain a qualification in religious education by the age of 16. However, no progress has been made in enabling the department to meet all the statutory requirements of the agreed syllabus. The range of teaching and learning methodologies are still limited and not effective in ensuring that pupils of all abilities, and in particular those with lower ability or special needs, make the necessary progress in learning. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3, as reported in the last inspection, have not improved. Improvement since the last inspection, therefore, is unsatisfactory.

BUSINESS EDUCATION

281. Overall, the quality of provision in business education is good.

Strengths:

- Teacher knowledge, expertise and effectiveness.
- The teacher-produced comprehensive worksheets and support material.
- Management of the pupils; the good relationships that contribute positively to the learning process.
- Well-prepared departmental documentation.
- Leadership of the department.

Areas for improvement:

- Raising the A*-C GCSE examination performance towards the secondary modern school average nationally.
- Ensuring that the pace, rigour and expectations evident in much of the teaching is consistent across all lessons.

282. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards of attainment are below both the national average and the secondary modern schools' average. The A*-C grades have declined in the business studies GCSE course for the last three years, although the A*-G grades improved in 2001. In 2001, 23 per cent gained A*-C grades with girls achieving seven per cent higher than boys. The gap between boys and girls achievement has halved over the last three years. In the GCSE business office applications course, 49 per cent achieved A*-C grades. Boys achieved 9 per cent better than girls. Almost all achieved an A*-G grade. This particular course combines both business studies and ICT.

283. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of work indicate that standards are below average, however pupils make satisfactory progress through the key stage. By the end of Year 11, pupils develop a range of skills including the ability to distinguish between the advantages and disadvantages of private limited companies, to draw up a cash flow forecast, to identify sources of finance and to merge documents from several files to create a holiday brochure. Pupils are able to manipulate financial data successfully, to make effective notes following class discussion, to interpret case studies and to work effectively in pairs. Pupils have an understanding of key terms and concepts such as tertiary sector, partnerships, controlling interest and market share. Pupils have well organised folders supported effectively by comprehensive worksheets and support material, which are prepared by the teachers. Homework is set regularly and is regularly marked; there are many positive comments that support further learning. Achievement at this stage is satisfactory.

284. The quality of teaching is good with some very good features. Teacher knowledge overall is very good and the planning of classroom activities is well organised and supports the learning observed. In the best practice, a range of different activities is planned and each stage is carefully explained to the class. At key stages the class is called back together to reinforce the learning that has just taken place. The different activities are most effectively outlined using an overhead projector and are reinforced at regular intervals. Key terms are clearly explained, pupil knowledge and understanding are regularly tested and the pace of learning is appropriate for the capabilities of the pupils. There was a little evidence of too much teacher direction and of not providing pupils with a full range of activities. In the main, however, pupils are encouraged to develop their learning and are supported to focus on the main points of the lesson.

285. Teacher expectations of the pupils are high: there is an expectation that pupils will do their best and that the teachers are there to help their progress. As a result there is good organisation in business classes and a sense of purpose that encourages pupils to remain on task and to be involved in their work. Pupils are constantly challenged to develop their skills, to develop their learning and to aim at the next target. They respond well to this approach. Pupils therefore work hard and their concentration is high.

286. Pupils learn effectively when teachers include opportunities to recap and emphasise the key ideas, as in a Year 11 class, when the teacher tested previous learning of the price of accommodation of holidays, stressed the need for pupils to evaluate their own work and encouraged pupils to work through the graded tasks systematically. Time management is good because of the forward planning and much is achieved in the best lessons. Learning support assistants are used effectively in lessons and they work well with the teachers. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships in the classes are very positive. Pupils work effectively together in pairs, they listen carefully to each other in question and answer sessions and they listen attentively to the teachers. Attitudes to the business studies and to the business and communication studies courses are very good, as is behaviour. There is a very good atmosphere of respect for learning and of a shared purpose between pupils and teachers in the business department.

287. The business accommodation is very good. There are three dedicated teaching rooms, one with a good range of computers. All rooms have pupil work displayed and key business terms are well placed around each room. The business suite provides a high quality-learning environment for the subject. Overhead projectors in every room are used most effectively by the teachers. A wide selection of good support material was observed in use during the inspection. The department has a good selection of books, magazines, videos and newspaper articles. The material is current and relevant and provides a firm basis for pupil learning. Access to ICT is very good and its use is fully integrated into both GCSE courses. Pupils of all levels of attainment use computers confidently and the work produced is of a high standard.

288. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. The head of department is a well-organised and competent manager and a very good teacher. She has produced a very thorough departmental handbook and the schemes of work provide a firm basis for supporting the newer teachers in the department. Team spirit within the department is strong and the teachers have a shared vision for promoting knowledge and understanding. The departmental head gives clear direction, support and momentum and there is a real desire to promote higher standards. No report was made on business education in the last inspection.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

289. Standards have been below average in GCSE. Achievement is poor. In the last examination in 2001, only four per cent achieved an A*-C grade; this is well below the secondary modern average nationally. The same pattern of achievement was evident in 2000.

290. Two lessons were observed and, in each, the teaching was unsatisfactory. Inappropriate worksheets were used for the attainment of the pupils. They did not give enough support or structure for satisfactory learning to take place. There was considerable evidence of pupils involved in off task activity and as a consequence the pace of lessons was too slow and the lesson objectives were not achieved. The range of teaching strategies was too narrow to keep the pupils' attention and as a result relationships in these classes were poor. Pupils were unwilling to listen to each other or to the teachers for any length of time.

DRAMA

291. Overall, the quality of provision in drama is good.

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching at Key Stage 4.
- Pupils' behaviour and response.

Areas for improvement:

- The organisation of the curriculum and teaching in Key Stage 3.
- Accommodation.

292. At the last inspection, drama, which was inspected as part of English, was commended for the well-structured lessons, the good behaviour expected and achieved, the contribution that the subject made to pupils' social development, as well as the high proportion of A*-C grade results at GCSE. Since then, the department has gone from strength to strength. Standards are very good at age 16 and good at age 14. GCSE drama results are consistently above the national average. Last year's examination candidates achieved 83 per cent A*-C grades, compared to 68 per cent nationally. This is well above national figures and substantially higher than the school's overall A*-C rate across all subjects. In 2001, this was repeated with 84 per cent A*-C grades and, contrary to trends elsewhere, boys attained marginally better than girls.

293. Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11 and, although more variable, good overall in Years 7-9. Planning and delivery is both imaginative and effective. Pupils are provided with sufficient structure and guidance, where appropriate, while teaching also facilitates increasingly independent work. Expectations are consistently high. In the best teaching seen, pupils were constantly encouraged to improve their work: second best is not tolerated! Questioning is focussed to enable genuine reflection and evaluation to take place. Subject knowledge is extremely impressive. Although units of work develop understanding of issues, such as the responsibilities of citizenship, refugees and bullying, the strength of the curriculum at both key stages is the focus on drama skills and techniques. Units of work on storytelling and reportage provide ways of structuring narrative; practical study of Shakespeare and others, tackling text from page to stage, provide an understanding of the cultural tradition within which drama takes place, as well as developing the skills that pupils bring to their prepared improvisations.

294. Learning is very good in Years 10 and 11 and good in Years 7-9. In Years 7-9, pupils understand the importance of building, accepting and not blocking when improvising spontaneously. A Year 8 lesson, using 'It Was Terrifying', a piece written by a refugee child arriving at a new school, enabled pupils to show that they could empathise with different characters and their points of views and work together to create a monologue for performance. In a lesson on status, most pupils were able to demonstrate how posture, expression, tone of voice, eye contact and spatial relationships communicate the relative status of different characters. They use a range of skills and techniques, such as thought tracking, frozen image, monologue and hot-seating in their work. Pupils are able to alter voice and physicality to create different characters, with varying degrees of confidence and conviction. They are able to improve their own work and that of others by constructive criticism.

295. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' understanding and use of the range of drama skills and techniques is consolidated. In scripted work and in devised work, they demonstrate their understanding of character motivation, as well as how to create dramatic tension, focus, and mood. They are able to edit, select and refine their work with increasing independence. In a lesson developing understanding of monologue, pupils created characters different from themselves skilfully and effectively. These were performed with confidence and clarity, and

pupils were able to evaluate their own work and that of their peers with sensitivity and perception. They use a range of narrative structures when making and performing drama and work with confidence and clarity in both naturalistic and non-naturalistic forms. A lesson on abstract work enabled pupils to demonstrate their understanding of how use of levels, relationship of body to space, weight, speed and rhythm create meaning. In a piece using 'Lord, what fools these mortals be' as the starting point, pupils used repetition, rhythm, gesture and the contrast between silence and sound to create a moving and thoughtful piece on pollution.

296. Attainment at age 14 is in line with national expectations. Given the below average attainment on entry to the school and the fact that drama is only time-tabled in Years 8 and 9, pupils make rapid progress. This progress continues at the same rate in Years 10 and 11 where attainment is above average, as the department's GCSE results suggest. Achievement at both key stages is, thus, very good.

297. Attitudes and behaviour are very good throughout Years 7-11. Pupils are attentive and supportive. They listen carefully to their teacher and each other. They participate with enthusiasm and commitment but this is always matched with individual and collective self-discipline.

298. Management of the department is excellent. The head of department's commitment and indefatigable energy, both within the curriculum and in a range of extra-curricular activities, ensure that drama makes a significant contribution to pupils' social development and a good contribution to their cultural and moral development.

299. Several members of staff teach drama in Years 7-9, and those that do so vary from year to year. Most, but not all, have subject specialist training. All are well supported and monitored by the head of department who provides effective schemes of work. In addition, the head of department provides guidance on the teaching of drama within English in Year 7: further liaison and more effective monitoring of this is planned. Because of the number of teachers involved and the turnover of those teachers from year to year, as well as the absence of drama as a separate subject in Year 7, pupils do not necessarily receive a consistent experience. The present Key Stage 3 curriculum covers the knowledge skills and understanding required in as much depth as is possible. However, a discrete drama lesson in Year 7 would not only ensure greater breadth and depth but would provide experiences which would develop pupils' confidence and personal development and thus impact positively on their learning in all subjects. Fewer teachers assigned to the teaching of the subject would be a more efficient use of human resources, as well as a benefit to pupils.

300. Assessment systems at Key Stage 3 inform planning well. At Key Stage 4, as the examination results suggest, course planning and assessment is extremely good. The success and quality of drama is particularly commendable given that the present accommodation is unsatisfactory. The drama studio is unavailable for use when public examinations are in session and one of the remaining two rooms used to teach the subject is an ordinary classroom.

PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

302. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS Level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	3	100	87	33	27	3.66	N/A
Geography	4	75	88	0	40	1.3	N/A
IT	3	33	80	0	22	0.33	N/A

GCE A Level

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	7	100	96	57	47	6.9	N/A
English literature	11	73	94	0	36	2.7	N/A
IT	5	80	85	0	22	2.4	N/A
Music	3	67	94	0	22	2.7	N/A

GNVQ Advanced

Cumulative %

Subject	No entered	% gaining pass		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England	School	England
Art & design	4	75	72.1	50	53.3	25	21.5	10.5	N/A
Business	17	82	61.0	17.6	45.6	41	17.3	10.9	N/A
Health & social care	9	78	57.8	33.3	44.6	0	17.6	6.7	N/A
Leisure & tourism	15	53	60.0	6.6	40.9	0	14.5	3.6	N/A
Manufacturing	1	0	56.7	0	37.8	0	13.4	0	N/A

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art & design	5	40	59.3	0	16.6	0	1.4
Business	6	50	62.1	0	17.5	0	1.2
Health & social care	4	75	64	0	17	0	1.0
Leisure & tourism	6	16.6	65.1	0	18.4	0	0.9
Manufacturing	1	0	50.6	0	16.3	0	0.6

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

303. There are no discrete mathematics examination courses in the Sixth Form but the department does contribute to key skills components in vocational courses. Small numbers of students re-sit their GCSE in mathematics in the Sixth Form, with around half successfully achieving grades A*-C. Lessons observed during the inspection were sound.

304. Until this year, there have been no science courses in the Sixth Form. An A Level in biology has been introduced in Year 12. This was not sampled during the inspection.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

305. The school has offered a GNVQ course in manufacturing for the last few years. This was not inspected.

BUSINESS

306. Overall, the quality of provision in GNVQ intermediate and Advanced Vocational Level business is good.

Strengths:

- Leadership in the department and relationships between staff and students.
- The use of ICT and the development of the business intranet site.
- Examination achievement, particularly in the GNVQ Advanced Level course.
- Monitoring and assessment to support learning and progress.
- Business links, involvement and performance in the Kent Schools' Business Challenge.

Areas for improvement:

- There are no major areas for improvement.

307. Results in GNVQ Advanced Level recovered well from the abnormally low figures in 2000. In 2001, they were above the national average, with well over a third gaining distinctions compared with a quarter nationally, and almost all succeeding in gaining the full qualification. For most students this represented very good achievement in relation to their GCSE attainment with five students going on to higher education. Business students also gained the best school results in the first year examinations of the new Advanced Vocational Level with almost all succeeding and with a third getting grades B or C. This

was broadly in line with national average, though for many students this represented good progress from often modest GCSE and GNVQ intermediate results. In the GNVQ intermediate business course, half gained the full award which was a little below the national average.

308. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of students' work confirm that standards are in line with national average. In the Year 12 intermediate group, students are able to construct a monthly personal finance forecast from a case study and can then transfer the results to an annual spreadsheet. They are confident in developing the spreadsheet and using the computer package. The Year 12 advanced students are able to use PowerPoint to develop a marketing presentation and in another module they are able to identify the added value factors in the production process. The Year 13 advanced students confidently discuss the different motivational inputs of four leading management theorists. They are able to reflect upon these contributions and to use these theories to identify different organisational practices in case study material. The quality of thought and discussion in the Year 13 group indicates that good progress is made over the two years. By the second year, students have gained in confidence and in their ability to express their ideas both orally and in writing. The Year 13 group followed up their analysis of motivational theorists with an impressive PowerPoint presentation.

309. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. Teachers are secure in their own knowledge of the subject and their management of the learning process is good. The support material used is of a high quality and the use of information and communication technology is impressive. Students are encouraged to use the full range of technology and this is evident in their folders and course work. The department has also developed a business intranet site for the students and this supports their research skills and develops the students as independent learners. These developments support the good progress made on the advanced course. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and share this readily with the students, who learn well as a result. Relationships between students and with staff are very good and this encourages students to exchange ideas, to listen to each other and to work together. In a Year 12 group, a student announced at the end of the lesson, 'I enjoyed that lesson, it was really interesting.' Such a comment illustrates the quality of the business studies experience that the students enjoy. Students work hard and there is a clear desire to do well in the subject. Coursework is well organised and is strongly supported by rigorous monitoring and assessment processes that underpin the progress that the students make. Students are very clear about their own strengths and weaknesses and what targets they must achieve to reach the next stage of their development. The business suite provides a high quality environment for effective learning.

310. There are very good links with local and national industries, in particular with the Education Business Partnership Network and the school's annual involvement in the Kent Business Challenge. The school's record is impressive, second in 2001 and first in 2000. Such links are invaluable as they provide the practical business experience so necessary for examination success.

311. The excellent leadership and management of the department support good student progress at this level. Students are encouraged to be active independent learners and the positive environment that the head of department has established supports them. She leads by example, is student centred and is an effective team builder. She is building up an effective teaching team and is most supportive of newer members of staff.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

312. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- A Level results were above the average for modern schools nationally in 2001.
- All Sixth Form students follow a key skills course.
- The quality of the coursework projects at A Level is good.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.

Areas for improvement:

- Students' research and study skills in class work and homework are less well developed.
- Ongoing assessment provides insufficient guidance as to how students can improve their work.
- The teaching of key skills in ICT lacks a consistent approach.

313. Results in GCE A Level have fluctuated in recent Years, partly because the number of candidates is relatively small. In 2001, for those students taking GCE A Level and the new AS Level courses, the proportion of students achieving pass grades was higher than the national average for modern schools although below national average for all schools. Students achieved lower pass grades. All Sixth Form students follow a formal key skills examination course in ICT, and their standards are broadly at Levels 1 and 2 of the assessment scheme, which is equivalent to GCSE grades A* to G.

314. The standards of the current students taking AS and A Level courses are similar to the results achieved last summer and most students make appropriate progress to achieve outcomes in line with expectations. The A Level students do well in their coursework producing software applications for real users such as a hire company or the video business in a local newsagents. Students show initiative and use skills of personal research and study, but there are some weaknesses in particular aspects of their work, such as the testing strategy and evaluating their work against clear criteria. In contrast to that course work and other student work in class is well below national expectations in terms of its quality and organisation, with many students having relatively small amounts of recorded work. Standards in the ICT key skills lesson are more variable and students' progress is dependent on the quality of teaching, though is always satisfactory and on occasions good.

315. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is satisfactory. In lessons seen the teaching and learning was never less than satisfactory and on one occasion was good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and so provide detailed notes for the theory section of the A Level course. In one lesson, the teacher used assessment effectively to modify the planned lesson so that it met students' needs more effectively. Teachers often check students' level of existing knowledge and skills at the start of lessons but there is inconsistency in the teaching of key skills. In one class, students worked through a series of exercises at their own pace but a significant number of students did not set themselves high enough standards. In the other class, the teacher's expectations were clear with more direct teaching of ICT knowledge and skills and consequently greater achievement, as all students were able to compile a database and carry out simple searches and sorts. An example of good practice was in a Year 12 lesson, where the teacher linked the database work directly to the students' vocational course. A weakness in some lessons is the lack of pace and precision with whole class teaching that slows down the rate of learning. Furthermore, students' written work is less organised and teachers have fewer than expected assessment records to track the progress of individual students.

316. More positively, teachers encourage students to use their initiative and take responsibility for their learning as they prepare their coursework studies. However, classroom management is not effective in helping students to think and learn for themselves, and take responsibility for their learning during normal class work and for homework.

317. For the A Level courses in Years 12 and 13, there are outline schemes of work together with detailed notes for modules in Year 12. The lack of a more detailed scheme of work, on occasions, gives teachers insufficient guidance about how to plan their lessons for this demanding course. There is similarly an outline scheme for the Sixth Form key skills course though its implementation is inconsistent and as a result, pupils make different rates of progress. There is a good system for monitoring the work of the ICT department each year, and the department has a well structured development plan to remedy the weaknesses identified by last year's monitoring. Sixth form courses are managed by a new head of ICT, who was appointed at the start of this term. He has made a good start but much remains to be done especially in terms of improving planning and assessment.

318. Since the last inspection, good improvements have been made to the number and quality of computers and there is now a modern ICT network in the Sixth Form area. In addition, Sixth Formers have access to the networks in other parts of the school, including the library. The quality of teaching and learning is similar to that reported five years ago, but A Level results improved in 2001. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

319. The school runs four courses within this curriculum group. It has recently started an AS Level course in sports studies and the inspection examined its progress in the first few months. More established are the leisure and tourism courses, which include the Intermediate Level of the same name, and the two advanced vocational courses that allow more specialisation into leisure and recreation and travel and tourism respectively. All the courses were sampled.

Leisure and Tourism, Leisure and Recreation, Travel and Tourism

320. Overall, the quality of provision in these courses is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of topics.
- A senior staff member provides valuable support for the course leader.

Areas for improvement:

- The teaching style adopted tends to limit the active participation by students in lessons.
- Monitoring of students' progress lacks rigour.
- Assessment is not used sufficiently to evaluate teaching and course content.
- There are only limited opportunities for first-hand experiences of vocational areas.

321. Students followed a mix of courses that led to qualifications in the old GNVQ advanced and new AVCE specifications as well as the revised GNVQ intermediate course. In the advanced GNVQ leisure and tourism standards were below national average with just over a half of students gaining the full qualification compared with around three quarters nationally. Results in the intermediate were well below the national average with only one of six students gaining the award. Standards at the end of the first year in the two new courses for the advanced vocational course in travel and tourism, and leisure and recreation, were well below national average. Less than half of students gained pass grades and most of the

passes were at grades D and E. These results were well below the A Level results in the last two years and represented underachievement for some students given their GCSE results. The main factors contributing to these lower results were a lack of staff familiarity with the new course units and failure of some students to meet the rigour of the new courses, including meeting submission deadlines.

322. From lesson observations and work seen, standards are below national average, though in general, most students are achieving in line with expectations. Students develop skills of investigation and presentation of evidence for units of work. Many have good word-processing skills, and provide detailed pages of contents and a bibliography. There are weak features of their work, however. For example, axes on graphs do not always have labels, and sources of information are not always acknowledged. Weaker students tend to recount factual detail without giving an analysis. In one portfolio of work on the 'The Sports Industry' the student showed a strong bias towards one sport only. Students understand the importance of marketing to the industries they study. They use terms, such as public relations, when they discuss the commercial importance of maintaining a good image with the public. Students who study physical education have a distinct advantage when they study exercise physiology as a unit in leisure and recreation. They know and understand very well the chemical changes made by demands on the body through exercise. They use terms like cardiac output accurately in their answers. However, other students have gaps in basic knowledge. For example, a GNVQ intermediate group discussing how to market a new rail development did not know the location of Holyhead. They tend to have weaker than average literacy and oral communication skills.

323. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good levels of knowledge and understand how to present this appropriately. For example, a teacher used an example of a pop group who acquired a negative image from fans. Fan club members received priority tickets for concerts first, but they were not the best seats. This example appealed to students who learned poignantly how negative images develop, and then had to suggest ways of recreating the group's image. Unfortunately in this lesson, the answers tended to be taken mostly from one part of the class, so students who needed encouragement to develop their oral skills were by-passed. Teachers use their specialist knowledge effectively and enthusiastically to challenge students with sharp questions. For example, 'why is exercise important to develop bone strength?' A weakness is that there is too much exposition and teachers overlook the importance of providing students with time for uninterrupted independent work. A common feature of all lessons observed is that students are rather passive and they do not receive enough challenge to participate, and so they lack sufficient motivation. However there are occasions when they take on responsibility for organisation. For example, students undertake all the arrangements needed for organising an end of term pantomime visit by Year 7. This is assessed for a unit called 'Event Management' in the leisure and tourism course. Theatre staff and Year 7 students, in addition to the course teachers, assess the level of students' skills. Teachers provide instructive written comments on students' work to help them improve the level of their grades.

324. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a sufficient range of subject knowledge and understanding of the course structures in the teaching team. The organisation of the team is clear, and all share the delivery of a number of units. A majority of students clearly learn more successfully when lessons have practical tasks and variety, so their weaknesses in basic skills are less exposed. These need improvement so that students can be more successful with written work. Students' progress requires close monitoring so that they meet the rigour especially of Advanced Level courses, and do not fall behind deadlines. Assessment needs evaluation to identify successful areas of work and where improvement can be made. The head of Sixth Form provides helpful support to the co-ordinator by monitoring levels and setting targets.

Advanced Subsidiary Level Sports Studies

325. Overall, the quality of provision in sports studies is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- Some good teaching.
- The application of theory into practice.

Areas for improvement:

- Opportunities for students to work independently and to use their own research.
- Students to use ICT in both their practical and theory work.

326. Although students have only been involved in this course for eight weeks, inspection evidence shows that standards overall in Year 12 are currently slightly below average but that most students are achieving appropriately given their prior GCSE attainment. They have a sound understanding of the theories of learning and are beginning to apply that knowledge to the coaching of skills and techniques in their practical lessons. Although they have also been studying the social basis of sport in theory lessons, most students do not yet understand the influences that society and social change have on the development of sport or the underlying values that have affected its development.

327. Overall the teaching of sports studies is good. The most effective teaching is well planned and has clear objectives that relate very closely to the examination syllabus so enabling students to develop relevant knowledge and understanding. Teachers relate very well to students and, together with the fast pace of lessons and the use of varied and appropriate resources, enable students to make good progress. Less effective teaching does not engage the interest of students fully and students are given insufficient responsibility for their own learning. As a result, students are not yet independent learners in terms of their personal research and evaluation, and make insufficient use of ICT in presenting their work. Assessment practice is still being established and does not yet indicate to students, current levels of attainment or clear targets to be achieved.

328. However, the course has been well organised so far, although long term planning, including development of schemes of work that relate well to the examination syllabus, has yet to be completed.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

329. The school provides two courses in the curriculum area, a GNVQ Intermediate Level and an Advanced Vocational Level course (AVCE), although also provides for the opportunity for some students to take a GNVQ Foundation Level where it better meets an individual need.

GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced Vocational health and social care

330. The overall quality of provision is very good.

Strengths:

- The teaching is very good in terms of its variety and challenge.
- The positive and inclusive learning context enables the active involvement of students with physical disabilities and learning needs.
- The course leadership is very good in terms of its planning and assessment practice and is supported by a strong and well-organised team.

Areas for improvement:

- The use of a Sixth Form public area as two main teaching rooms limits some aspects of teaching and learning.

331. Most recently, the numbers taking health and social care at GNVQ intermediate and vocational Advanced Level have increased significantly with the growing popularity of the courses. Students are consistently successful in the Intermediate Level with 10 of 14 gaining passes in 2000, which was broadly in line with national rates though the numbers gaining merits and distinctions were below average. In 2001, the student numbers were smaller though of the six entries at foundation and Intermediate Levels, four students were successful. In 2000, there was one successful vocational Advanced Level student at merit level, and in 2001 numbers rose to nine candidates with seven being successful and three gaining merits. This was close to the national pass rate and though the average points score was below average, three students gained merit awards. Students in both courses achieve well when account is taken of their often modest prior attainment at GCSE and GNVQ level.

332. In lessons and work seen, standards are below the national average though most students are making sufficiently good progress to gain a qualification at Intermediate or Advanced Level. Intermediate students have a sound understanding of different care settings and can apply their knowledge to specific contexts. They can relate that knowledge well to their own experiences, though in their coursework students have more limited skills in analysing and evaluating evidence drawn from a variety of sources. At Advanced Level, most students are working at a pass standard with the higher attaining students showing stronger literacy and greater confidence in applying specialist language and theory appropriately.

333. Students make good progress in both the intermediate and advanced courses and are achieving well. This is particularly so in terms of their oral skills as a result of the different opportunities for discussion and group presentation. This was particularly evident in a Year 12 advanced lesson, where students related a study of self-concept to their own child investigations.

334. Overall teaching is very good. All lessons are well planned with clear learning outcomes that are shared with the students. Learning activities take account of the specific needs of students, evident for example, in a GNVQ intermediate lesson where a number of students with special educational needs were benefiting from structured support that developed their understanding and literacy skills. Teachers make use of a variety of group and individual activities that ensure that students are actively involved in the lessons and help them develop more independent learning skills. A particular feature of all the teaching is the positive and inclusive learning context it creates in which all students are fully involved and positive about their learning. This is particularly so for the higher than average

number of boys as well as others with limited physical mobility or additional learning needs. Marking is thorough and provides constructive advice as to how students can improve. In a vocational Advanced Level lesson, for example, group work looking at exemplar assignments enabled students to better understand the assessment requirements.

335. The course co-ordinator provides very good subject leadership. She is very conscientious and hard working and sets high standards in a small team who share her teaching strengths and enthusiasm. Learning schemes are well planned with assessment and moderation procedures that are thorough and clearly documented. Very good use is made of work placements in both years to provide a realistic vocational context for learning and this in part, offsets the difficulties in fully developing other outside links. Resources are sound and though ICT does not exist in the main teaching area, there is good access nearby. Accommodation is less satisfactory. The main teaching area is in an open space in the Sixth Form block that serves as a thoroughfare and locker room. The strength of the teaching overcomes most of the potential problems, although is still limiting when two classes are being taught at the same time.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

336. The school's provision for this area is strong and students have the opportunity to pursue art and design as a double award Advanced Vocational Level course or as a single award GCE A and AS Level in 2D (painting and drawing, graphic design), textiles and photography. The advanced vocational course uses a wide range of media that includes painting and drawing, three-dimensional work and photography. Both courses were inspected.

337. A Level drama and theatre studies has also been introduced since the last inspection: the first group will take their final exams in Summer 2002. Learning is good. Pupils devising a piece using Brechtian techniques demonstrated their understanding of these in discussion and in practical work. They were clear on what effect they intended to have on an audience and were able to negotiate effectively and creatively, trying out various ways of staging and characterising, to support this aim. Achievement in the Sixth Form is in line with national expectations.

338. A small number of students study A Level music each year. Examination of work and discussion with the two students studying the A Level course, in Years 12 and 13 respectively, shows that they are at the level expected. The Year 13 student, who achieved a C grade for the AS examination has clear knowledge of a wide range of music and shows understanding when discussing the different elements of the music. Sound harmonic knowledge contributed well to the composition element of the AS Level examination, producing a composition in an individual style.

GCE Advanced and Advanced Subsidiary Level Art and design courses

339. Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is good and very good in textiles.

Strengths:

- Overall standards in art and design courses have been at the national average in most years and most students achieve well in terms of their prior attainment.
- Standards in art textiles are particularly high.
- The overall quality of teaching is good, especially in textiles.

Areas for improvement:

- Teaching simultaneously a wide range of art and design courses imposes considerable pressure on limited teaching resources.
- Weaknesses exist in technical proficiency and personal expression in photography.

340. A Level results in art and design have been consistently in line with the national average since the previous inspection. In 2001, all students were successful in the three GCE A Level art courses of two dimensional, photography and textiles as well as the two new AS Level courses in textiles and photography. The art textiles results were particularly good with student attainment above the national average and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. Overall, school value added data indicates that art students achieve well in relation to their GCSE results. Some students at the end of Year 12 take GCSE in art and design and photography. Students make good progress and reach standards above the national average. Across all the art courses, girls achieve better than boys.

341. Standards achieved in textiles are very high at all levels. Students' work shows they have a good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of techniques and processes such as batik, appliqué, embroidery and fabric painting. They undertake wide-reaching research and develop their ideas systematically, exploring a wide range of media confidently and competently. Few boys pursue the course and the standards they achieve are somewhat lower. A very wide range of ability is evident for those students following the painting and drawing and graphic design course. Overall standards are in line with the national average but achievement, particularly for the lower attainers is good. Students use a wide range of media confidently and develop their own interpretations of the set themes. Highest achievement is characterised by work based on direct observation rather than images developed from photographic images. For example, one student using ICT image manipulation software and simple block printing techniques produced an interesting abstract image developed from a study of a seedpod sequentially. Students' work resonates well with relevant artists' work. Standards achieved by girls are higher than boys as they undertake more extensive investigation work and more ambitious experimentation. Average standards are achieved overall in photography. Students have a good understanding of the basic aspects of camera handling and darkroom practice but GCE A Level students show little knowledge of more complex elements such as the relationship between exposure, apertures, shutter speeds and depth of field. Their knowledge and understanding of the work of photographers is less than expected for students working at this level.

342. As in the previous inspection, the quality of teaching is always satisfactory and often good and leads to high standards. Teaching is very good in textiles, sometimes excellent; projects have clear objectives that are shared with students at the outset and an enabling approach is adopted that empowers and sometimes inspires the students. As a result, students take considerable responsibility for their own work. Their sketchbooks, for example, contain extensive examples of relevant artists' work, developmental ideas and experiments with a wide range of media, including some that are unconventional, such as tea stains. The quality of teaching is good in painting and drawing. Its main strength is the extreme lengths teachers go to, to provide individualised programmes for each student. As

a result, all students make good progress though this reduces opportunities to develop a whole group dynamic. Similarly, photography teaching has to provide for a wide range of ability and prior experience. Opportunities to extend the advanced students are therefore significantly reduced with teaching needing to support relative novices as well. Though teaching copes well under such challenging circumstances, such an approach affects the standards that can be achieved. Teachers provide good spoken feedback to all students and mark work thoroughly. Every opportunity is taken to develop students' reading and writing skills and as a result students write at some length and sometimes perceptively about art and artists. Further scope exists to develop their speaking skills as most lack confidence in this respect. Opportunities are taken to apply number and measuring and estimating, for example, are widely used in photography.

343. Students are excellent learners in textiles. They tirelessly apply themselves to the subject giving up hours of their own time to develop their ideas and collect relevant information. Concentration is excellent in lessons because students are pursuing ideas that are important to them. They use equipment, tools and resources sensibly and seek help when they need it. Painting and drawing and photography students are motivated and most work hard but the pace is noticeably more relaxed than in textiles lessons. Independent learning is very prominent throughout.

344. Textiles benefits from excellent leadership and management that results in very high standards. The department is very well organised and provides a very good range of curriculum experiences for the students. Art and design benefits from effective leadership and management but teaching across such a wide spectrum of ability with two courses, fine art and graphic design, some of whom are following endorsed and some unendorsed syllabuses, simultaneously imposes considerable pressure on limited teaching resources and should be reconsidered. Photography provision is satisfactorily managed but is similarly challenged by teaching at three levels simultaneously.

GNVQ and AVCE art and design

345. The overall quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Standards are in line with those nationally and students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Students are well motivated and work with considerable independence.
- There are strengths in the teaching of painting and drawing.

Areas for improvement:

- Weaknesses exist in knowledge and understanding in the teaching of ceramics.
- Lower achievement is characterised by an undue reliance on images derived from photographic sources.
- Teaching groups consist of advanced and intermediate students. This places undue pressure on limited resources.

346. Standards are in line with those expected nationally and school value-added data indicates good achievement. GNVQ standards were not reported in the previous inspection. Since 1999, GNVQ intermediate students have achieved satisfactory examination results but results were below average in 2001 and some underachievement was evident. GNVQ advanced students have achieved high standards in relation to their own prior attainment and in 2001 two merits, one distinction and a pass were achieved. This compares well with national statistics and represents good achievement.

347. Students are currently achieving average standards in most aspects of the course. This represents good achievement for these students. In painting and drawing they undertake extensive research in relation to set themes. During the inspection students were engaged in a wide variety of activities including graphic design, model making, painting and drawing. Impressively, all students had undertaken extensive research and many had made good use of ICT to gather information. Literacy skills are good and widely evident in the annotations students add to their preparatory work. Girls' achievement is higher than boys'; their work is more sophisticated and shows a deeper level of research. Students use a wide range of media that includes collage, batik, screen-printing and graphic design. They have studied the work of artists whose work relates to their studies. Their written work shows they have assimilated the information they have found. The main shortcoming in their work is an undue dependence on working from images they have acquired from books, magazines or from the Internet rather than from direct observation. In photography, average standards are achieved. Intermediate students know the basic principles of camera handling, developing and printing and advanced students demonstrate competent skills in finalising still life photographs. Student's knowledge and understanding of relevant artists' work in ceramics is below average.

348. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory with a number of good features that enable students to make good progress and achieve well in most aspects of the courses. The main strengths are in the teaching of painting and drawing but some shortcomings exist in photography and ceramics. The main strength of the teaching is the sensitivity to, and the provision for, students' individual learning needs. All classes contain students with a wide range of ability including those who have been identified as having special educational needs. Teaching is inclusive because it sensitively adapts provision to meet students' needs. For example, in a painting and drawing lesson all students were engaged in completely different work that ranged from basic model making to sophisticated mixed-media work. The diversity of students' needs in groups that contain both intermediate and Advanced Level students, places a considerable strain on the human and material resources. For example, to enable all students to be actively engaged, all aspects of the photographic process were simultaneously underway in photography. Ceramics teaching places sufficient and appropriate emphasis on the practical aspects of the subject but insufficient emphasis on background knowledge means that students' understanding of related artists is less developed.

349. Students respond satisfactorily to the courses. They take substantial responsibility, for their own learning and, for the most part, operate as independent learners. They undertake wide-ranging research and develop their ideas well and experiment with media and techniques in painting and drawing. Students are responsible and can be trusted to use tools and equipment sensibly. For example, photography students are largely autonomous and are able to work unsupervised in the darkroom or using sophisticated cameras and lights safely. They handle chemicals and processes safely and responsibly. Behaviour is good but most students talk as they work which sometimes reduces the rate of progress.

350. The area is under new leadership and has changed examination board. Much of the planning and documentation is therefore in the process of being redrafted. Leadership and management are effective and are enabling good standards to be achieved. The practice of teaching intermediate and advanced students side by side, particularly with such a wide ability range, is, as reported above, problematic. The curriculum provided is rich and interesting and fully engages the students. Good links with careers education and guidance exist and students have benefited from visits from practicing designers which has given them a valuable insight into career opportunities in art and design. All of the students interviewed during the inspection were very positive about the course and expressed no negative views. The assessment opportunities provided are helpful to the students who know what their strengths and weaknesses are and what they need to do to improve.

HUMANITIES

351. An A Level is offered in geography. All Sixth Form students follow a module of religious education each spring term and there is to be a one-day conference. This provision meets the statutory requirements for Sixth Form religious education in the Kent Agreed Syllabus. No lessons were observed at the time of the inspection but the school has addressed the previous lack of provision.

GCE Advanced and Advanced Subsidiary Level Geography

352. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths:

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding.
- Good questioning used to check understanding.
- Teachers match work and exposition well to students' abilities.

Areas for improvement:

- Increased involvement of students in the presentation of their ideas and learning.
- Setting of targets and monitoring of progress.
- Use of assessment to evaluate schemes of work and teaching.

353. There was a substantial improvement on the poor 2000 results in 2001, when three of four students gained passes at GCE A Level and a similar number passed the new AS Level at the end of Year 12. Those standards were below national average though most students' achieved satisfactorily in relation to their attainment in GCSE. The new A Level examination will be taken for the first time in 2002. Currently three students are studying this course. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of students' work indicate broadly satisfactory achievement on both courses.

354. The AS and A Level courses are taught as a combined group and, in lessons and work seen, standards are below the national average. Students make satisfactory and, in some cases, good progress given their modest GCSE background and are achieving appropriately. Written work is variable in quality reflecting different student skills and motivation. Some take care to organise notes methodically and present work in an orderly way, necessary for examination preparation. The notes of Year 13 students are of better quality. They have a good understanding of the topics studied. In one lesson, for example, students appreciated the factors contributing to world population growth and understood a number of theoretical models that they used to analyse real situations. They noted that the Demographic Transition Model that links changes in population size to economic development is based on developed economies. They discovered it is not as applicable to less economically developed countries. AS students use their previous learning to consider the reasons for flooding. For example, they use Bangladesh as a case study, and know that deforestation in Nepal contributes to an increased volume of water in the River Brahmaputra. They use helpful techniques, such as spider-diagrams, to plan their thoughts before starting an investigation.

355. Students learn to handle many sources of evidence - maps, statistics, photographs, and graphs - so that they give more complete answers. Their notes show that they respond positively to written comments from teachers. For example, by providing more details about waves (height, length, gradient, etc) to explain why they are constructive or destructive. Year 13 students show they have gained greater confidence in questioning sources of evidence and discussing issues with teachers. Students relate well to each other and collaborate helpfully in learning together.

356. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge that is used well in questions that raise levels of learning. For example, a teacher built up a list of types of internal population migration from answers given by the AS Level students. They give good support to students whose prior attainment levels are very mixed, checking that individuals understand their tasks so they progress independently. Teachers plan lessons thoughtfully so students acquire insight into complex ideas from structured and clear expositions. They are adept in delivering input jargon and organising work for both AS and A Level groups in each lesson. However, this limits the amount of time the teacher devotes to each group. The important element of discussion and debate is curtailed by available time. Consequently opportunities for students to learn from each other, to try out their learning and ideas, and to develop communication skills are greatly limited. Teachers have appropriate expectations of students' standards for each level. For instance, AS students are expected to investigate widely the causes of flooding and make links between physical and human geography. Year 13 students are challenged to offer their geographical opinions on whether intervention in coastal erosion is the best way to manage the coast. They use a case study of the East Sussex coastline to find evidence to support their views. Teachers are investigating arrangements for a fieldwork visit to a coastal area next term. This will provide students with first-hand observation and measurement of marine processes, and add much to their learning.

357. The subject is well managed by a head of department who was appointed in September 2001. One of the Sixth Form teachers is experienced but has not taught the subject at this level for some time. The other teacher is newly qualified. Both are given good support by the head of department. Teachers manage the teaching of two groups in each lesson very well, but this arrangement for all lessons is unhelpful because there is insufficient time for necessary discussion and debate at Advanced Level. Learning would also benefit from more frequent monitoring of progress, and better use of assessment so teachers are clearer about what is succeeding and where provision can be improved.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

GCE Advanced and Advanced Subsidiary Level English

358. Overall, the quality of provision in English is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- Students enjoy their English course.
- One hundred per cent achieved AS Level passes in 2001.
- Few students drop out and numbers are rebuilding.

Areas for improvement:

- Resources need further development.
- Monitoring of students' teaching and learning is currently inadequate.
- Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.

359. The AS Level examination results this summer showed improvement but remained well below average. All students who took the examination achieved D and E grades. No student dropped out. After a period during which the number of A Level candidates declined to three, standards improved. Eight students out of 11 entered gained grades C to E, making very good progress relative to previous attainment, and the rest achieving appropriately. Results remain below the national average.

360. The standards of work of current students are also below average. The modular nature of the course and a flexible application within the Sixth Form curriculum means students of different years are taking the same modules of study but students in both years

are making satisfactory progress in relation to their GCSE results. In their study of 'The street car named Desire', by Tennessee Williams, students in Years 12 and 13 needed help to understand the significance of the ending of the scene being studied. Students made tentative explorations of Stanley's character, but failed to identify the important connection with the character of Mitch. Students predicted, fairly accurately, the last scene of the play. They have produced no significant written work as yet, but what there is, demonstrates below average achievement in terms of textual analysis and technical accuracy. In their study of the pre-20th century novel, students, with help, analyse the types of relationships demonstrated in 'Emma' by Jane Austen. They are helped to find quotations to accompany these explorations.

361. In a Year 13 and 14 lesson, students gained familiarity with literary terms to help them in their analysis of Elizabethan metaphysical poetry. They successfully analysed Shakespeare's sonnet 73 with reference to his age, working through the three quatrains systematically. They began to prepare 'They flee from me' by Thomas Wyatt in response to an examination question. Students' written work is below average. It contains too little analysis, lacks development and can be technically inaccurate.

362. Learning is insufficiently supported by wider reading of literary criticism and contextual material. This would extend and consolidate students' learning and improve standards. Assessment does not adequately reflect that of the external examination so that students sometimes do not understand how they can improve their work in line with the requirements of the examination.

363. Teaching is satisfactory in both years. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Questioning is skilful and students respond well. This often leads to a good standard of productive discussion. There are no particular expectations, largely because assessment is inadequate. The pace of lessons sometimes lacks urgency. However, students are comfortable in the lessons, and gradually develop their motivation to learn.

364. The co-ordinator is recently appointed but no plans were seen for monitoring teaching and learning and other aspects of provision, which is a weakness. The department is actively considering the adoption of a coursework-based curriculum. This would suit students' prior attainment better and serve to raise standards. Library and other resources to extend students' learning are currently insufficient.