

INSPECTION REPORT

WEALD OF KENT GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Tonbridge

LEA area: West Kent

Unique reference number: 118791

Headteacher: Mrs S. A. Rowell

Reporting inspector: Mrs S. Browning
1510

Dates of inspection: 24 - 28 September 2001

Inspection number: 190389

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Girls

School address: Tudeley Lane
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr T Perkins

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
1510	Sheila Browning	Registered inspector	Art and design Theatre studies	Standards of attainment and achievement Teaching & learning School improvement and effectiveness
9169	June Keyworth	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes values and personal development. How well does the school care for its students. Partnership with parents
1249	Joseph Edge	Team inspector	Sciences Biology Chemistry	Leadership and management How good are the curricular and other opportunities
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Humanities Geography History Sociology	Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
22958	Terence Bailess	Team inspector	English	
3601	Eric Blaire	Team inspector	Psychology	
6620	Barry Juxon	Team inspector	Mathematics	Accommodation Efficiency
31845	Michael Clarke	Team inspector	Modern languages French Spanish	
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2521	Sandra Killman	Team inspector	Business education	Staffing
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Weald of Kent is a selective Grammar School for girls. Since the last inspection the school has become a specialist language college. It is a community school in partnership with The Kent Music School and Kent Netball Association. It is about the same size as other secondary schools, with 914 girls aged 11–18 and 3 boys on roll. Pupils are of much higher than average attainment on entry, reflecting the selective nature of the school. The percentage of pupils identified as having special needs is 3 per cent; this is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals, at 1.5 per cent, is well below the national average. There are few students of ethnic minority origin and the percentage of students speaking English as an additional language, at 0.76 per cent is low. The school serves a wide catchment area. Pupils come predominantly from homes that are socio-economically advantaged.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. Pupils achieve excellent standards. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are a strong feature of the established and successful teaching and learning partnership. Behaviour, personal development and relationships are all excellent. Attendance is very high. Leadership and management are strong and effective. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards at A/AS level are above the national average and those for similar schools and other sixth form providers. This continues the trend over the past five years.
- Standards are excellent. The proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more GCSE passes at A*-C and A*-G is very high.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Leadership by the headteacher and senior management team is strong. The governors are well informed and are proactive.
- The breadth of curriculum offered, with its extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, is very good.
- The school promotes excellent standards of behaviour; the personal development of pupils and relationships in the school are excellent
- Attendance is excellent.

What could be improved

- The statutory requirement for religious education is not met in year 11.
- Some of the accommodation is cramped and it is inadequate in some areas.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has responded most effectively to the issues raised in the last inspection in November 1996. External examination results have improved consistently over the past 5 years. The latest school GCSE results for 2001 show a higher number of

students obtaining A* and A grades and fewer achieving lower grades. In 1999 the school was acknowledged as one of the fifty most improved schools at A level. Entry to the sixth form continues to increase. Schemes of work have been revised several times with an emphasis on strategies to provide more challenging learning opportunities. Teachers are clear about pupils' prior attainment and use this information well. The curriculum has been reviewed extensively, and very effective teaching methods are used. Self-supported study for all pupils is well developed. Access to the library, information and communication technology, and increased adult assistance in these areas, is much improved. Facilities for design and technology are new, all science laboratories have been refurbished and two additional laboratories have been created. The additional and refurbished accommodation has also led to significant improvements in facilities in other faculty areas.

STANDARDS

The table 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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	C
A-levels/AS-levels	C	A	B	

Key

very high A*

well above A

average

above average B

average C

below average D

well below E

average

Nationally there are a small number of selective schools and for the purposes of comparison they are all grouped together. Selection procedures vary across the country and locally. The Weald selects from the top 30 per cent of pupils and this is a much broader ability band than for many schools in the national grammar school group. Comparisons with all selective schools are therefore limited. The trends indicate improving performance in all key stages in comparison with all schools since 1996. In 2000, the proportion of pupils who achieved five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C and A* to G were very high. Results were among the highest 5 per cent nationally. Results at this level are consistently high and are improving faster than the national trend. Most recent school GCSE results (2001) show improvement in the percentage of students achieving A*(14 per cent). Results in the 2000 GCE A/AS level examinations were above average. In 2000, the proportion of pupils who achieved two or more A levels or AS equivalent was above the national average. The school results for A level have improved consistently over the past 5 years. Over the last three years, the average A/AS level point score per candidate entered for two or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent was above the

national average and those for similar schools. The percentage of grades A and B passes at 54.2 per cent is good, and the average percentage of A/B is in line with the A to B in A level.

The 2000 national tests for fourteen-year-olds showed pupils' results were excellent in English, science and mathematics. When compared to similar schools, standards in English were well above average. They were well below average for mathematics and below average for science. The trend in the school's average point score for all core subjects was broadly in line with the national trend. The school exceeded the challenging targets set for pupil achievement in 2000.

Current standards at the end of Year 9 are very good. Standards in mathematics and science show further improvement. In English a higher number of students achieved the higher levels (levels 7 and 8) for their age group. Numeracy and literacy standards are well above average. Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is well above expectations for pupils of this age. Pupils make very good progress. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is very good; they are supported well. The progress that more able pupils make is very good. Higher-attaining pupils also make good progress.

Standards being achieved currently in Years 10 and 11 are very good and they are good in the sixth form. Significant improvements are evident in GCSE double science, the percentage of A* grades at GCSE level, A-level psychology and chemistry. Particular strengths are found in the GCSE overall point score, for separate sciences, economics / business studies, history, art, French, mathematics and in most of the Advanced level subjects. Pupils achieve an average point score in English language, English literature and geography.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils are keen to succeed, interested in what they do, they are enthusiastic and proud of their achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent, throughout the school in lessons and at all other times. Pupils show maturity and responsibility.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils respect property as well as the values and beliefs of others. Their personal development is effective and exemplified in their ability to take responsibility.
Attendance	Excellent. Above average levels of attendance and minimal levels of unauthorised absence.

Pupils' attitudes are a positive contributory factor to the standards achieved; they are eager to work. Behaviour is excellent. The personal development of pupils is excellent and relationships are very positive.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

Teaching is of a similar standard in each key stage. In over two-thirds of lessons seen, teaching was found to be very good or better; in all lessons it was at least satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well. The quality of teaching overall in English, mathematics and science in Key Stages 3 and 4 is very good. Particular strengths in teaching are that teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects, they plan and deliver challenging and interesting lessons and use effective methods. Questions are penetrating and perceptive, they demand the right amount of intellectual challenge and give pupils confidence. The school meets the needs of all pupils well. Pupils are clear about what they are doing and why they are doing it. They respond to the challenge they receive and learn effectively and exert themselves.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum offers a very good range of learning opportunities and meets statutory requirements except for religious education in year 11. The curriculum includes many elements beyond the subject areas, of overall very good quality. Extra-curricular and enhancement provision is wide ranging. The quality and range of the curricular provision in the sixth form is very good. The main strength is the balance

	between academic study and other elements, especially those that enrich the experiences of students.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils are fully integrated, they are confident and achieve well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Teaching, curriculum and extra-curricular and enhancement activities make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development. The provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good, spiritual provision is good.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Pupils feel secure and well supported. Provision for the care and support of pupils makes a strong contribution to their development; they are well known by tutors. Pupils are fully involved in their own target setting.
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The curriculum is very good. All pupils take and achieve a short GCSE course in religious education in years 9 and 10 and this gives them greater flexibility to study other subjects. Extra-curricular and enhancement activities are wide ranging and are popular amongst pupils. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good. Parents are strongly supportive of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Strong and very good leadership and management throughout the school. This is an effective team. All have a clear view of the educational direction for the future of the school. The implementation of the school's aims, values and policies is central to its success.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors' are well informed have considerable expertise and are proactive in their role. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities with the exception of religious education in Year 11.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school evaluates its own performance well.
The strategic use of resources	Financial control and the strategic use of resources are very good. The school seeks best value for all expenditure. Overall, there is an appropriate number of teaching and non-teaching staff. The accommodation much improved, although some remains cramped and it is inadequate in a few areas. Resources are good.

The headteacher has contributed a great deal to the success of the school and leads the school extremely well. The senior management team is strong and effective and they work collaboratively together. The school applies the principles of best value efficiently.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects girls to work hard and achieve their best. • Behaviour is good. • The school is well led and managed. • The school is approachable. • Girls like school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right amount of homework. • The school could work more closely with some parents. • More information about how their daughter is getting on.

The inspection confirms the parents' positive views of the school. Some parents would like more homework set some would like less. Homework is set regularly and a balanced programme is in place. It is up to both pupils and teachers to ensure that the balance is retained. Inspectors judge that the school works sufficiently closely with parents. Information about how pupils are progressing is good and regular. Some 11 per cent of parents responded 'don't know' to questions because of their daughters having only just started at The Weald.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form with 194 girls and 3 boys is much larger than other sixth forms nationally. Over recent years the numbers in the sixth form have increased steadily. The percentage of students receiving free school meals at 1.5 per cent is low. The number of students with special educational needs at 1.8 per cent is low. There are few students from ethnic minorities. The sixth form provides a wide range of subjects and offers enrichment courses, including a Key Skills course that all students follow. Eighty-three per cent of students from year 11 continue into the sixth form, a few also join from neighbouring schools. Students wishing to join the sixth form must have an average overall GCSE point score of at least 5.5 as well as A*, A or B in subjects chosen for AS level or in a similar subject. A few exceptions are made for individual circumstances. Additionally it is expected that all sixth formers will have reached a grade C in mathematics and English Language. The 16+ examination results are excellent. All students start on two-year programmes leading via AS to AL level.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very successful and cost-effective. Students learn very effectively and achieve very good examination results. In 2000, the proportion of students who were entered for two or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent was above the national average. Over time, standards have improved considerably. Governors, senior staff and other managers are all successful in improving the extent of benefits gained by individual students during their time in the sixth form. The range of subjects offered for advanced study is very good. Also, the school offers a wide range of additional subjects including language study for every student during Year 12. There is an impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities and the school provides a rich environment for personal development. Teaching and learning is excellent in over one in six lessons, in over a third it is very good and it is never less than satisfactory. The main strengths and areas that could be improved in the sixth form are:

Strengths

- Students learn very effectively and achieve excellent examination results. Over time, standards have improved significantly.
- Teaching and learning are excellent in over one in six lessons; in over a third it is very good and it is never less than satisfactory
- There is an impressive range of curricular opportunities. The school achieves a good balance between academic achievement and the overall personal development of students.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are very effective.
- Students are diligent in their work and they have a strong determination to succeed. Relationships with one another are excellent.
- Attendance is excellent.

What could be improved

- Some aspects of the accommodation: the facilities in art are insufficient to meet demand; there are insufficient rooms in the humanities suite and the science preparation room is too small. In addition facilities for music are poor. The

library, although extended since the last inspection, is too small for the increasing number of students. In addition the lack of an additional hall for assemblies, dining facilities and extra-curricular activities limits opportunities. The attractive sixth form study and social area is far too small and many students are unable to gain access during lunch or break times.

- There is insufficient time allocated to deliver the units within the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, therefore the school does not meet the statutory requirement.

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
Mathematics	Very good quality of provision. A level results are well above average and improving. The standard of work seen in lessons is high and students have a good understanding of the subject. Teachers prepare and teach their lessons well. Students are well motivated and make good progress.
Biology	Very good. There is very good learning and teaching and current work is of a high standard. Results in 2000 are broadly in line with national averages. The most recent results are far better.
Chemistry	Satisfactory. Results were below average in 2000. The most recent results show substantial improvement. Current work is satisfactory, and learning and teaching are good.
Design & technology	Very good. Standards in design and technology (A & A/S Product Design) are very high; teaching is very good.
Economic / Business studies	Very good quality of provision. Challenging targets are set for year 12 in respect of their attainment at GCSE and the end of the A level course. Good integration of ICT skills with business theory. Good standard of assessed written work. Overall, teaching is good. Attainment at A level was above the national average in 2000. Results for 2001 indicate an improving trend.
Art & design	Very good. A level standards are above the national average. The standard of work seen in lessons is high.

	Students work well independently, are well motivated and make very good progress. Teaching is very good and on occasion it is excellent.
Theatre studies	Very good quality of provision. A level results are above average. All students passed with A and B grades. Teaching and learning is never less than good and is often excellent with an emphasis on independent learning.
Geography	Very good quality of provision. A level results have been above the national average for the past three years and show an improving trend Teaching and learning are very good, with an emphasis on independent learning skills.
History	Very good quality of provision. A level results have been consistently above the national average for the past three years, with an improving trend. The quality of teaching and learning is very good with an emphasis of independent learning skills.
Sociology	Very good quality of provision. A level results have been well above the national average for the last three years with a steadily improving trend. Teaching and learning are very good with an emphasis on independent learning.
Psychology	Good. While standards were below average in 2000, students are now achieving well as a result of generally very good teaching and much improved planning.
English Literature	Very good quality of provision. Attainment is well above average. Standards have improved significantly since the time of the last inspection. Students reach high standards in written work in particular. Teaching is very good. Teachers know their subject very well and have a good understanding of students' learning needs.
Modern languages	Very good quality of provision. Teaching is good in Spanish and very good in French. All teachers are first-rate linguists who have high expectations of their students and who work hard to motivate them. A level results in French were well above average and were above average in Spanish. In 2001 the number of higher grades increased.

A high number of students obtained A and B grades. Over the last three years the average A/AS level point score per candidate entered for two or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent was above the national average. Work was sampled in Key Skills, media studies, music and ICT. Teaching was good overall with some excellent teaching seen in information and communication technology.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
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How well students are guided and supported	Support is always sensitive to student needs. Tutors know their students very well and monitor their progress effectively. Students are also very well supported by the school's effective pastoral system. Information to research career pathways for higher education, further education, training and employment is up-to-date and plentiful. Good procedures are in place to ensure the health and safety of students.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The school is firm and effective in the way it plans provision to support its key values. Target setting and quality control give the students very good support.

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"> • Teachers are accessible for help. • They are taught well and challenged. • Range of activities and enrichment • Choice suits talents and aspirations. • Helped to study independently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More advice about future options. • Response to the views of sixth form. • More information about progress. • Be treated as responsible young adults.

All but a few students are very happy with the school and would recommend it. Inspectors agree with the positive views of students. The inspection confirms the school provides a considerable amount of up-to-date information to assist students in their research to find details of careers, options and pathways to higher education or the world of work. With regard to students' views, the school council is an open forum where views and suggestions are treated with respect. Information about progress is informative and well targeted. Students are helped to settle in well and are treated as responsible young adults.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement "outstanding" in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to "very weak".

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards are very high. The proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more GCSE passes with A*-C and A*-G grades is excellent.

1. Pupils achieve excellent standards. Trends indicate improving performance in all key stages in comparison with all selective schools since 1996. The Weald selects from

the top 30 per cent of pupils and this is a much broader ability band than many schools in the national grammar school group. Comparisons with all selective schools are therefore limited. The 2000 national tests for fourteen-year-olds showed that pupils' results were very high in English, science and mathematics. Standards were higher than national averages at the time of the last inspection and they continue to improve, keeping pace with the national trend. The trend in the school's average point score for all core subjects is in line with the national trend for fourteen-year-olds.

2. When compared with those of selective schools the overall results were in line. Standards in English were well above average, in mathematics well below average and below average in science. The school exceeded the targets set for pupil achievement in 2000. Last year the school targeted both mathematics and science and the 2001 school results show substantial improvement. Data is not yet available for national comparisons to be made.
3. Currently, standards at the end of Year 9 are very good. Standards in mathematics and science show improvement. In English, a greater number of pupils achieved the higher levels (levels 7 and 8) for their age group. Numeracy and literacy standards are well above average. Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is well above expectations for pupils of this age. Pupils make very good progress. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is very good; they are supported well and achieve very good results.
4. The progress that more able pupils make is very good. The school has identified about 20 per cent of pupils as exceptionally able in different subject areas. Within years 7-11 there are 69 girls that fall into this category. They are carefully supported and various successful strategies are in place to enrich and extend them.
5. In 2000, the proportion of pupils who achieved five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C and A* to G was very high. Results were among the highest 5 per cent nationally. Results in the General Certificate for Secondary Education (GCSE) are consistently high or are well above national averages and are improving at a faster rate than the national trend. The most recent school GCSE results (2001) show an improvement in the percentage of students achieving A*(14 per cent).
6. Currently standards being achieved in Key Stage 4 are very good. Significant improvements are evident in GCSE double science, and the percentage of A* grades at GCSE. Particular strengths are found in the, GCSE overall point score, mathematics, separate sciences, art, business studies, history, French and German. The standards achieved are related directly to the quality of teaching and learning. The school promotes a positive climate in which a successful teaching and learning partnership is sustained. Overall standards in lessons are very high in both key stages 3 and 4.
7. Standards of literacy are particularly high, and pupils' clear command of language enables them to achieve well in many subjects. For example, some excellent accounts were given when interpreting Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci" and "When I Have Fears". Pupils knew that Keats was suffering from consumption and that he thought it unlikely he would survive long. They selected pertinent text and used this to illustrate and decode the meanings and messages within the texts. They successfully drew out the elements of the romantic poem and the language used was accurate and vivid. In art in year 7 when drawing from observation, pupils described the basic elements and were familiar with terms such as line, tone, texture and shape.

Standards of reading are excellent. Pupils demonstrate independence and a wide range of reading, as for example, when researching diverse cultures while studying "Rice without Rain" by Minfong Ho in Year 9. Pupils dramatised the reading and interacted very well and they showed they had a good understanding of events and politics. Standards in writing are usually high and work well presented. There is some exemplary work in Year 11. For example, an imaginary account of a Jewish girl in the ghetto and her experiences in a concentration camp, how she befriends a commandant's daughter and the resulting consequences. The writing was vivid, intelligent and highly emotive. There are generally some excellent research studies within English. Note-taking skills across subjects are very good; pupils select, compare, and utilise information and draft and redraft their work.

8. Pupils apply and use mathematical ideas well in many areas of the curriculum. For example in design and technology, pupils in Year 10 planned and researched ideas for a candlestick project. They applied the design brief with detailed and accurate specifications. In mathematics, pupils in Year 7 learned to manipulate and use averages when handling and comparing data.
9. Pupils' ICT skills are very good and ICT is used extensively to support work in other subjects. Work indicates that pupils have above and often well above average skills. Year 7 pupils in an introductory lesson to the library quickly accessed the in-school intranet pages and explored different search engines. It is evident looking through the work sample across year groups that ICT is used effectively for independent research. Pupils are proficient users, in art they use ICT most creatively. Skills in word processing are developing appropriately.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good.

10. The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and it is now very good. At that time, pupils were found to be making good progress but some higher-attaining pupils were insufficiently challenged; this is not usually the case now. Schemes of work have been revised several times with an emphasis on inclusion which ensures more challenging learning opportunities for pupils. In over two-thirds of lessons seen, teaching was found to be very good or better; in all lessons it was at least satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the school has focused more on the professional development of staff and encouraged the evaluation of teaching and the sharing of good practice. These are seen as positive and contributory factors to the improvements seen in teaching. Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are taught well. The quality of teaching overall in English, mathematics and science in both Key Stages 3 and 4 is very good. Particular strengths in teaching are that teachers are knowledgeable and have expertise in their subjects and are well qualified. Lesson planning is detailed, and focused on challenging and interesting delivery. Teachers know their pupils well and have very high expectations of what they know, can do and can achieve. Teachers have good information about pupil's attainment on entry to the school and this information is used well. They use effective methods and give clear explanations. Questions are penetrating and perceptive and teachers also provide the right amount of intellectual challenge and give pupils confidence. In a Year 8 science lesson, when finding out which surfaces were the best emitters and absorbers of heat, the teacher focused on questioning using keywords to reinforce and consolidate pupil's understanding.
11. Most lessons have a good balance between the sharing of information and activities in which the pupils can participate. Lessons are often brisk and resources are used

well. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson about solving simultaneous equations by means of rearranging and substitution, the teacher had planned the lesson to use every minute. In a Year 9 German lesson, for instance, the teacher made excellent use of the whiteboard, tape recorder and overhead projector to build on pupils' previous learning about the gender of nouns. In another Year 11 ICT lesson, the teacher used ICT resources well to reinforce pupils' ability to use web sites and to apply security features. She met the needs of individual pupils effectively and gave them personal feedback about the progress they had made towards reaching their targets. The school meets the needs of all pupils well. Teachers use a range of teaching methods that challenge all pupils, including those of higher attainment. Homework is set on a regular basis.

12. Pupils respond to the challenge they receive; they work hard and learn effectively. Their positive attitudes to learning are a particularly strong feature of their learning. Pupils are clear about what they are doing and why they are doing it; they work productively and at a good rate. They readily participate in discussion, are not afraid to express their views and opinions and appear to be very confident. Pupils are highly motivated; they are eager to learn and pursue their interest beyond the classroom. They are clear how well they are achieving and are fully involved in the process of target setting. In discussion, many pupils said that target setting helped them to understand what they had to do to improve further. Relationships are excellent and teachers are supportive of their pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and achieve well. Pupils with English as an additional language also achieve well and provision is very good.

Leadership by the headteacher and senior management team is strong. The governors are well informed and are proactive.

13. The leadership and management of the school are strong, with excellent leadership by the headteacher. She promotes the culture of continuous improvement and celebration of success. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the educational direction of the school; she promotes a culture in which there is a continuous striving for improvement and in which all success is celebrated, in whatever form it takes. She has high expectations of all who work and learn in the school.
14. Management is well structured with clearly defined and understood responsibilities. The structures within the school facilitate the school's priority of 'continuous improvement'. Together, the headteacher, senior management team and the governing body focus on continuous improvement of educational standards and provision for all pupils. Leadership is decisive but provides ample opportunities for senior management, heads of faculties and others with responsibilities to make and accept decisions and to develop professionally. As a result, those in posts of responsibility are informed, empowered, accountable and effective.
15. Members of the senior management team work well together and their skills are complementary. They are given considerable responsibility to manage different aspects of the school and they provide overall direction. The team consists of a deputy headteacher with responsibility for the curriculum, heads of faculty overview and monitoring of the language college targets. There are three assistant head teachers, and a school manager. They all carry out their duties efficiently and effectively and are respected and valued by the school.

16. Heads of faculty are informed and fully aware of their roles in monitoring pupils and being accountable for teaching and standards within their faculties. The school has developed a model for self-evaluation and faculty reviews are part of this model. Recently the creative arts, technology and science faculties underwent such a review and the findings provided useful indications for future development. Developments are implemented, managed, monitored and evaluated systematically.
17. Monitoring and evaluation form an integral part of the school's practices. Every year, the analysis and evaluation of examination performance is followed by an action plan to bring about further improvement, which then forms part of the review and planning cycle. This system has proved to be most effective.
18. The governing body is fully informed about the progress the school makes against agreed targets in the school development plan. This process is well documented in the annual planning and review cycle, and within governors' meetings and their portfolio responsibilities. Governors cover all aspects of the school's work. They visit the school regularly and are well informed to make decisions. They are supportive and successfully carry out their role as critical friend to the school. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities with the exception of the provision of religious education in years 11, 12 and 13.

The breadth of curriculum offered with its extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities is very good.

19. The National Curriculum is fully in place with the exception of religious education in Year 11. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant. Provision beyond the basic curriculum is very good. In Years 7 to 9, in addition to the statutory curriculum, pupils study a balanced programme. Homework is set regularly and is seen as supporting and consolidating class work. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good as it is for pupils with English as an additional language and for those who are gifted and talented.
20. The school aims to provide pupils with the widest possible choice. The language college status and community partnerships have also meant that the school is able to offer further enrichment. In languages, high-attaining pupils in Year 10 have the opportunity to take GCSE early. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 can enter double and or triple science courses. In Key Stage 4 the DfEE approved the request for pupils to be disapplied from design and technology in order to take additional languages. Pupils study related themes within the PSHE programme such as careers, work experience, and key skills.
21. Basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are taught well within the curriculum. There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection. Schemes of work have been modified in the light of changes in the GCSE and to ensure that they take account of strategies and policies for numeracy, literacy and ICT; they include methodologies which involve and challenge all pupils. Planning for subjects is good and detailed and shows a logical and strong rationale for teaching. The changes have affected the timetable and as a result it is now spread across two weeks.
22. In years 9 and 10 pupils take a short GCSE course in religious education thereby allowing greater time and flexibility for other GCSE courses when in Year 11. Despite this good initiative, the school does not meet the requirement of provision for statutory religious education in year 11.

23. The development of self-supported study and distance learning for all pupils to 'encourage them how to learn' is well advanced. There are good examples of distance learning projects in modern foreign languages, psychology and sociology.
24. Extra-curricular provision is rich and diverse and makes a considerable contribution to the personal development of pupils. Levels of participation are impressive, as are the involvement and commitment of staff. The school makes good use of the Children's University, peripatetic music lessons and there are numerous educational trips and visits. The community links are also broad, including voluntary service, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Young Enterprise, and links with businesses and schools.
25. Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is good overall. The strengths are within the moral, social and cultural provision. Spiritual provision in class teaching is very good both in terms of reflection and discussing issues. Pupils plan and deliver assemblies and organise the Thought for the Day. Provision of the daily act of collective worship, however, is inconsistent, so that only some students receive their entitlement.
26. Provision for moral development is very good. Pupils are clear about right from wrong and they openly discuss moral and ethical values. Pupils are actively involved in charitable works. Social provision is very good; pupils have numerous opportunities to work and relax together. Relationships are excellent and pupils integrate well with one another. All pupils are expected to study independently, and older pupils organise their own work experience. Pupils also enjoy the many opportunities for leadership and responsibility. Cultural provision is very good. The school successfully celebrates the cultural diversity of its pupils. Internationalism is also a strong feature of the school and a large number of exchanges and foreign visits and links take place. This is also a focus for all departments. A wide range of cultural activities are provided by the school and many are organised by the pupils. The curriculum is further enriched by foreign language exchanges and visits to theatres, concerts and art galleries.

The school promotes excellent standards of behaviour; the personal development of pupils and relationships in the school are excellent.

27. Attitudes to school and behaviour are excellent. This area was identified as a strength in the last inspection and it continues to be so. Pupils work hard and want to succeed; they have high expectations for themselves. The excellent relationships make a very positive contribution to the learning environment. Pupils are courteous and are considerate to one another; they show respect for the feelings of others and for views different from their own. Pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility and to show initiative; they join the school council, organise talent events at lunch time, older pupils help younger ones and run their own extra-curricular clubs such as drama, Christian Union and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Many are involved in various charities. Pupils are also involved in exchange programmes and home-stay programmes for Japanese students. There are many opportunities for exchanges and links with other schools, for example Young Enterprise and Children's University. Pupil's views and opinions are very much valued by the school and the school actively seeks these through the debating forum and the school council. They are encouraged to use ICT, the library and other facilities for personal study. They use these facilities in a mature and responsible way. Pupils are confident, articulate, polite and friendly individuals. They are fully integrated and there are no issues of inclusion.

28. The pupils, together with the teachers are committed to improving all aspects of school life and self-review. Time is allocated to allow for pupil self review with tutors and action planning takes place on a regular basis. Pupils keep records of their own targets and other personal development activities in their student planners. In discussion, pupils said how helpful they find target setting in terms of assisting them to focus on improvement and to see how well they are achieving. Their positive attitudes to learning and acquiring skills will enable them to continue life-long learning.

Attendance is excellent.

29. The attendance rate at the school in the 1999-2000 academic year was excellent and was very high compared with the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence at the school in the same year was well below the national average. This undoubtedly has a positive impact on progress and attainment. Punctuality is good throughout the school. Procedures to promote good attendance are thorough. Registers are monitored on a regular basis. The school complies with legal requirements. Parents spoke at the parents meeting of pupils who were supported well through ill health. The school is sensitive and aware of the needs of pupils.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Some of the accommodation is cramped and it is inadequate in some areas.

30. There are some deficiencies in the accommodation. The facilities in art are insufficient to meet demand, there are insufficient rooms in the humanities suite and the science preparation room is too small. In addition, facilities for music are poor. The library, although extended since the last inspection, is too small for the increasing number of students. In addition, the lack of an additional hall for assemblies, dining facilities and extra-curricular activities constrains such opportunities. The attractive sixth form study and social area is far too small and many students are unable to gain access during lunch or break times.

The statutory requirement for religious education is not met in year 11.

31. In years 9 and 10 pupils are entered for a short GCSE course in religious education, thereby allowing greater time and flexibility for other GCSE courses when in Year 11. Despite this good initiative, the school does not meet the requirement of provision for statutory religious education in year 11.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

32. The school should now:

- (1) Seek further assistance in terms of funding for the implementation of phase 3 of the building programme, so that the inadequacies of the accommodation may be addressed in respect of music, art and humanities, library space, hall space, dining facilities and sixth form facilities and a science preparation room.
(Paragraphs 30,65)
- (2) Review the provision for statutory religious education in year 11.
(Paragraphs 18, 22, 31, 49, 51).

Sixth form

- (1) Some aspects of the accommodation are cramped and inadequate in art, science, humanities and music. The library, although extended since the last inspection, is too small for the increasing number of pupils. In addition, the lack of an additional hall for assemblies, dining facilities and extra-curricular activities limits opportunities. The attractive sixth form study and social area is far too small and many students are unable to gain access during lunch or break times.
(Paragraphs 30, 65).
- (2) There is insufficient time allocated to teach units within the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Therefore, the school does not meet statutory requirements.
(Paragraphs 18, 22, 31, 49, 51).

The school is fully aware of the above key issues and continues to address them.

The school acknowledges that some of the accommodation is cramped. The school has gone to enormous efforts to raise substantial funds for the building programme and it has successfully secured some funding. Despite this, funds fall short of the amount required for the necessary improvement.

The school does not meet the statutory requirements for religious education because the total time and the range of topics provided by the conferences on religious and ethical topics are insufficient. In respect of non-compliance, this is partially compensated by a Philosophy and Ethics option and three half-day religious conferences each year.

Minor weakness

- The school does not fully meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship.
(Paragraphs 25, 49).

This was a key point for action at the time of the last inspection. There are still insufficient facilities to enable the school to collect students together in large groups. Alternative arrangements have been developed and improvements are seen but practice remains inconsistent, so that only some students receive their entitlement.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	24
	Sixth form	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		85

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7-11							
Number	3	13	4	4	0	0	0
Percentage	12	54	17	17	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	11	21	25	5	0	0	0
Percentage	18	34	40	8	0	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	720	194
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9	n/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	30	4

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	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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
	2000	n/a	120	120

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	119	119	117
	Total	119	119	117
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (99)	99 (98)	98 (98)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	98 (98)	96 (98)	88 (88)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	119	120	119
	Total	119	120	119
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (100)	99 (100)	99 (100)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	98 (96)	98 (98)	92 (87)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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
	2000	n/a	116	116

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	114	115	117
	Total	114	115	117
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	98 (97)	99 (98)	100 (99)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	62
	National	38.4

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National	n/a	n/a

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
		2000	n/a	86

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	n/a	18.9	18.9	n/a	4.6	4.6
National	n/a	18.6	18.2	n/a	2.9	2.7

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	0	n/a
	National	n/a	n/a

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	n/a
	National	n/a	76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	0
White	889
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	53.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	245

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.6
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Average teaching group size: Y3 – Y13

Key Stage 3	28.8
Key Stage 4	24.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	2,544,546
Total expenditure	2,490,084
Expenditure per pupil	2,724
Balance brought forward from previous year	92,127
Balance carried forward to next year	146,589

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	33

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
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	914
Number of questionnaires returned	806

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	46	7	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	45	42	2	0	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	50	1	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	51	14	2	11
The teaching is good.	32	56	2	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	47	11	2	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	43	5	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	29	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	27	50	12	2	7
The school is well led and managed.	47	44	2	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	43	4	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	44	6	1	10

Other issues raised by parents

Some 70 written comments were also received from parents. Many were very positive about the standards achieved, the good quality teaching and leadership of the school and the stimulating learning atmosphere. A few were concerned about inconsistencies with homework. Some 11 per cent of parents felt they were unable to respond adequately to the Ofsted questionnaire as their daughters had only just started at The Weald.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

33. In 2000, the proportion of students who were entered for two or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent was above the national average for all maintained schools, similar schools and for all post-16 providers. In most subjects, results were above average for all maintained schools and strengths were evident in many subjects. The performance of students was significantly better than the average performance nationally in all maintained schools in: communication studies, economics / business studies, English literature, French, geography, German, mathematics, religious studies and sociology. Results were below the national average in chemistry and other social studies and they were in line with the national average in biology and physics. A comparison of the relative performance of subjects within the school indicates that results in: art and design, communication studies, economics, history, physics, and sociology were significantly better than in other subjects.
34. School results have improved consistently over the past 5 years. Over the last three years the average A/AS level point score per candidate entered for two or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent was above the national average and those for similar schools. In 1999, the school was recognised as one of the 50 most improved schools at Advanced level.
35. Currently there is no national comparative data for the 2001 results. However, the latest school Advanced level results show a higher number of students obtaining A and B grades and fewer achieving lower grades. Overall, school results show further improvement in most of the Advanced level subjects and particularly in biology, chemistry and psychology. Good results are evident from the Advanced Subsidiary examinations. Virtually all students took at least 4 subjects in the Advanced subsidiary, all were entered and 97 per cent of students passed. This is the first time that the examination has run and there are no national comparative data available at the moment. The percentage of grades A and B passes at 54.2 per cent is good, and the average percentage of A/B is in line with the A to B in A level. Of particular note in the 2001 AS level results are art and design, biology, economics / business studies, design and technology, German, geography, media studies, music, sociology, and theatre studies There are significant increases in the average point score per student in Advanced level from 6.3 in 2000 to 6.8 in 2001.
36. The proportion of students staying on in the sixth form after Year 11 at 83 per cent is high. Students joining the sixth form usually follow their chosen courses through to completion. In Year 12 in 2000, one student left at the end of the AS course and two students joined to start A2 courses. Virtually all students entering Year 13 start at least three A2 courses to complete their advanced qualifications. Year 12 students also have the opportunity of an additional language choice.
37. Currently the standards being achieved in the sixth form are very good. The standard of work seen indicates that students are making very good progress and at the right level of challenge appropriate to their individual learning needs. Target setting is securely in place for all students. The school supports early entry or extended GCSEs and Advanced levels for identified students. Students with special educational needs are identified and very good provision is arranged. There are no significant

differences in standards achieved by students of different ethnic background. At times, the sixth form includes German and Japanese students and they progress equally well. They make considerable progress in personal terms and results show that students achieve well in relation to their previous results. Data analysis indicates that students exceed the realistic yet challenging targets set.

38. Standards achieved in the sixth form in key skills (communication, number and ICT) directed specifically towards accreditation are appropriate. Sixty-six per cent of students gained level 3 in two skills. An identified target for 2002 is to increase the provision for ICT to ensure that more students move from level 2 to 3. The school recognises that curriculum provision for key skills last year was insufficient, particularly for ICT, and has taken steps to rectify the situation.
39. Individual subjects incorporate an effective teaching of key skills in their courses. Students usually take coherent notes. Overall, students analyse texts and extract relevant facts, and they present their findings well. Numeracy is developed through the use of graphs to represent statistics in several subjects. Students make most effective use of ICT when presenting work and researching on the Internet. The wider key skills of working with others, study skills and problem solving are well developed in nearly all subjects.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

40. Attitudes to school are excellent. Students are diligent in their work and they have a strong determination to succeed. They have positive and constructive relationships with their tutors, especially when discussing their academic progress. Those in Year 13 plan and use their time well and those in Year 12 are just beginning to do so. Relationships with one another are strong, having respect for others' feelings and views different from their own. They are keen to take responsibility and show initiative and commitment in their contribution to the life and ethos of the school, which is valued by the school. They are confident, articulate, polite and friendly individuals, with a strong sense of understanding moral, social and cultural issues. Attendance is very high. Their positive attitudes to learning and acquiring skills will enable them to continue learning throughout adult life.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

41. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was very good. Teaching and learning were excellent in over one in six lessons, in over a third they were very good and they were never less than satisfactory. Some excellent teaching was seen in art and design, biology, design and technology, French, geography, ICT, history, sociology, and theatre studies. Overall good teaching was seen in business education, chemistry, mathematics and Spanish. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. At that time, students were found to be making good progress but some higher-attaining students were insufficiently challenged. This is not the case now. The curriculum has been revised several times to ensure inclusion for all students, to provide more challenging learning opportunities and to match the new examination requirements. The teaching given promotes equal opportunities and racial harmony.

42. Particular strengths in teaching are that teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects. Work is thoroughly prepared and teachers present and discuss their subject well with students. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed and have high expectations. In a Year 12 French lesson, the teacher captured the interest and enjoyment of the students right from the start with her enthusiasm for the subject. In theatre studies a frequent and strong feature of the excellent teaching was the sheer enthusiasm, sharpness for detail and expertise demonstrated. Clear learning objectives are shared. Teachers enable students to deepen their knowledge and understanding by using varied teaching methods. For example, in a Year 12 history lesson, students in role as committee members debated the issues of enacting parliamentary legislation, making it illegal for children under 12 to work in factories. Afterwards they said "This debate has really made us think - I'll remember it much better". All students are encouraged to work independently. Questions are penetrating and perceptive, and teachers demand the right amount and present the right level of intellectual challenge. Lessons are often brisk and resources are used effectively. Work sampling shows good use of ICT to support studies.
43. The teaching of key skills within subjects is well planned and effective. Students are encouraged to analyse texts and extract relevant facts, and present their findings well. As for example, in a Year 13 English lesson students could identify the key features of the social context of the novel. Numeracy skills are developed through the use of graphs to represent statistics in several subjects. As for example in a Year 13 biology lesson, students were encouraged to record the results of their chloroplast investigations to help them better understand absorption spectra. Students make most effective use of ICT. The wider key skills of working with others, study skills and problem solving are well developed.
44. Assessment ensures that individual students know how well they are doing and how to improve. In discussion, many students said they found target setting particularly helpful in terms of their understanding of what they had to do to improve further.
45. Students acquire new knowledge and skills, they develop ideas and increase their understanding. Students' positive attitudes are exemplified by a Year 12 lesson looking at celebrity lifestyles and the popular press. They participated well and were not afraid to express and justify their views. At the end of the lesson, individuals made presentations to their fellow-students. Students are clear about what they are doing and why they are doing it. They work productively and at a good pace. They are well motivated, interested and eager to learn. Students' work indicates evidence of high quality research and extended study and thinking. In art and design, for example, preparatory, supporting studies and research for individual work are of a high quality. Relationships are excellent. Students with special educational needs are making very good progress and achieve well. Students with English as an additional language also achieve well and they are supported well.

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

46. The quality and range of the curricular provision is very good. The main strength is the balance between academic study and other elements, especially those that enrich the experiences of students.

47. The range of subjects offered for advanced study is numerous. The school offers a wide range of additional subjects, such as psychology and theatre studies. The options include advanced study of a wide range of languages. In addition the school provides language study for every student during Year 12. Language college status has enabled the school to offer a wide range of languages at several levels, including French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Japanese. A particular feature is that all students undertake some language study during Year 12. Provision for key skills is good overall. Subject areas make good provision. Apart from the good contribution of individual subjects, there is specific teaching for qualifications in number, communication, and information and communication technology. Much is done to foster the wider key skills of working with others, study skills and problem solving.
48. Students' preferences are met to a commendable extent. Guidance for students as they enter the sixth form is very good and the vast majority of their preferences are met. The provision at the school complements other local and different provision accessible to students. Just fewer than 20 per cent of pupils do not stay on to the sixth form. The school takes reasonable care to inform them about what else is available locally. Those who meet the entry criteria and choose to stay on find that their aspirations and potential are very met well. The school remains true to its overall aims, to provide an environment that will encourage students to share in responsibility for the development of their intellectual, practical and interpersonal skills, enabling them to take their place in an international society with confidence. Year 12 students take up to four AS courses, together with the modern foreign language course and the enrichment programme. The start of the first A2 courses - the second year of the advanced level courses - has been handled well. Students have specialised from a suitably broad base. In both Years 12 and 13 sufficient time is maintained for the well-established and successful provision covering enrichment, community and cultural links. The routes taken by students over the previous 2-3 years show a fine record of overall success. In 2000, nine per cent of students went on to further education, 57 per cent to higher education, seven per cent employment and 27 per cent took a gap year and then pursued higher education.
49. Provision beyond the elective subject curriculum is very good. There is a thorough and effective programme for personal, social and health education for all in the sixth form. Careers advice, including external advice where appropriate, is very good and there are good links with higher education. Work experience is arranged on an individual basis. There is very good provision, extra to the provision in subject areas, which enriches students' lives, all with high take-up by sixth formers. Students value these influences very highly. In school there is an impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities, including elements from creative arts, sport, outdoor pursuits, and Christian Union. Beyond school, students are given many opportunities for cultural and community links, both in this country and abroad, including visits, work experience, and exchanges. There is also a good range of visits to arts events in the United Kingdom. The community links are also broad, including voluntary service, The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Young Enterprise, and links with businesses and schools. The school does not meet the statutory requirements for religious education because the total time and the range of topics provided by the conferences on religious and ethical topics are insufficient. Non-compliance is partially compensated by a Philosophy and Ethics option and three half-day religious conferences each year. The provision in the daily act of collective worship is inconsistent, so that only some students receive their entitlement.

Spiritual, moral social and cultural provision

50. Overall, provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A strong moral and social ethos permeates throughout the school and sixth formers are widely encouraged to take the lead in the full range of activities available. A policy statement concerning spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision and response documents from each department in the school were produced three years ago but have not been reviewed since.
51. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. There is no core religious education course in Years 12 and 13, although this is partially compensated by a Philosophy and Ethics option and three half-day religious conferences each year. Sixth formers also take a leading role on the Assemblies Committee, organising the themes for assemblies and the Thought for the Day.
52. Provision for moral development is very good. Sixth formers have an Amnesty International group and raise and address moral issues in the school debating society. The Philosophy and Ethics course, and the religious conferences, provide discussion of moral issues such as abortion and Third World poverty. Issues of this kind also arise in many of the AS and A level courses followed by students, such as art and design, theatre studies and humanities subjects.
53. Provision for social development is very good with many opportunities for students to participate in school life and take responsibility. Sixth formers play a full part in the activities of the school such as the school council. Years 12 and 13 raise money for charity as part of the Charities Group, a recent cause being facilities for the treatment of breast cancer. As prefects, they take responsibility for supervision of other pupils and set a high standard of dress and behaviour for the rest of the school. They are expected to study independently and to organise their own work experience. They also play a part in a scheme for mentoring Year 7 pupils.
54. Provision for cultural development is also very good. A wide range of cultural activities is provided by the school and organised by the students. The curriculum is enriched by foreign language exchanges and visits to theatres, concerts and art galleries. Students take part in extra-curricular music, dance and drama. Other cultures are experienced through expeditions to places such as Tanzania and Ecuador. A Japanese intern visiting the school for a term contributed to many areas of the curriculum. Pupils study other religions in the A level Philosophy and Ethics course, which gives them some insight into living in a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

55. Procedures for the monitoring of students' work and progress are very good, particularly in English and the humanities subjects. Effective communication between students and their tutors ensure that students are given accurate information about their achievements; they are helped to understand their strengths and weaknesses in individual subjects and assessment is used to set realistic targets. Overall, teachers have an accurate and reliable picture of how well students' are achieving and of the progress they make. A further strength is that the information is up-dated at least each term. Senior staff and governors have ample information by which to judge the standards of work of sixth formers.

56. Students appreciate the support and guidance given by their tutors who are experienced in their role. The head of sixth form and the senior tutors monitor the effectiveness of the whole system. The term review papers are circulated to parents and then signed by tutor, student and parents. In general, teachers in subject areas use this flow of information to guide curricular planning well.
57. Students are told very clearly about the quality of their work and the quality and use of on-going assessment in lessons is very good. Subject teachers also use longer-term assessments very well to drive home messages about current standards and about how to improve. The impact of the support and advice via tutors is distinctive, because tutors have the assessment records for all subjects being studied by each individual. Students' individual reports are informative and critical. The information provided includes potential examination grades, whether earlier targets have been met or not, full descriptions of achievement and effort, together with an action plan for how to improve.

Advice, support and guidance

58. Tutors are diligent in reviewing each individual student's progress. They know their students very well, monitor their progress and their considered advice is received well by the students. The school has a natural aim that all students will succeed in their studies to secure a place in higher education or in their choice of career. Information to research career pathways for higher education, further education, training and employment is up-to-date and plentiful. The work of the librarian enhances the provision and ensures that students are suitably advised and ably assisted in their research, including those who would prefer not to go on to higher education. Support is always sensitive to their needs and if personal problems arise the students are also supported very well by the school's effective pastoral provision. Effective procedures are in place to ensure the health and safety of students.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?

59. The vast majority of parents are very satisfied with all that the school provides. They say that the school is well managed and led, that teachers have high expectations of both work and behaviour and that behaviour is good. Parents say they are well informed about their daughter's progress and find the school approachable. The range of activities outside lessons makes a good contribution towards helping their daughters to mature and to become more responsible as they progress through the school. Inspectors' confirm the parents' positive views of the school. A very small minority of parents feel too much homework is set, and that the school could work more closely with them. Some parents would like more information as to how their daughters are getting on. Homework is set regularly and a balanced programme is planned. It is up to both pupils and teachers to ensure that the balance is retained. Inspectors judge that the school works sufficiently closely with parents. The information about how pupils are progressing is good.

60. All but a few students are very happy with the school and would recommend it. They are taught well and challenged and helped to study independently. Their work is thoroughly assessed and tutors are accessible to discuss any problems. They enjoy the wide range of enrichment activities. They have found printed information clear and helpful in selecting courses which they feel suit their talents and aspirations. The inspection supports the positive views of the vast majority of the students. A significant minority feel that they are not sufficiently advised about future options, and that the school does not respond to their views. The inspection confirms that the school provides informative and well-targeted information about progress. Students are provided with a considerable amount of up-to-date information to assist them in their research to find details of careers, options and pathways to higher education or the world of work. With regard to students' views, the school council is an open forum where views and suggestions are treated with respect. Students are helped to settle in well and are treated as responsible young adults.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

61. The school has very clear aims for the sixth form, to provide an environment that will encourage students to share in responsibility for the development of their intellectual, practical and interpersonal skills, enabling them to take their place in an international society with confidence. These aims are shared by the staff, the governors and the students. Governors, senior staff and other managers are all successful in improving the extent of benefits gained by individual students during their time in the sixth form.
62. The governors are closely involved in managing change, as, for example, in formulating the school's response to the government initiative on sixth form provision. Governors play a full and effective role. For example, governors were briefed in good time about how the school could respond to the changes to sixth form provision, as required by the recent new arrangements. The arrangements chosen by the senior managers with the governors have ensured certain improvements, such as to breadth of study for Year 12. The school aims to develop the strength of each student's intellect, and equally to develop their personal and social qualities. The various levels of middle management work consistently within these overall aims. The outcomes for both these elements are very strong. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very effective.
63. The targets set for students' attainment and progress are ambitious yet achievable. The offer the school makes to students approaching age 16 attracts a large majority - recently about 81 per cent - to stay into the sixth form. There is ample monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and standards attained in subject areas, as a result overall teaching is of high quality. Monitoring is particularly effective in humanities. Some subjects have established monitoring structures and systems others, such as chemistry are just starting to set in motion improvements seen as needed by the school.

Staffing

64. There are strong systems in place to recruit, induct and develop staff in the sixth form. The school deploys staff very well, and their expertise has a positive impact on achievement and the standards students reach at the end of their course. Teachers are well qualified and offer a good range of experience.

Accommodation

65. The school occupies a spacious site with extensive playing fields which provide excellent facilities for recreation and outdoor sports. There is sufficient good quality accommodation for most subjects, although there are some deficiencies: facilities in the art and music departments are too cramped and there is a lack of storage; the prep-room in science is too small, and there is insufficient storage; and some of the humanities rooms are too small. The library, although extended since the last inspection, is too small for the increasing number of pupils. In addition, the lack of an additional hall for assemblies, dining facilities and extra-curricular activities constrain further opportunities. The attractive sixth form study and social area is far too small and many students are unable to gain access during lunch or break times. The school acknowledges that some of the accommodation is cramped. Since the last inspection, facilities for technology are new and all science laboratories have been refurbished, with two additional laboratories created. These changes have led to other improvements into other faculty areas. Most of the humanities faculties have been relocated on the same floor. The English department has received a suite of rooms, the psychology department now has a permanent base and the modern foreign languages department has an additional room. The school has gone to enormous efforts to raise substantial funds for the Phase 3 building programme and in the past it has successfully secured funding from the New Deal for school's fund and lottery money. Despite these efforts, funds fall short of the amount required for the necessary improvements.

Resources

66. Since gaining language college status, the school has invested substantial funds into resources over the past three years. Expenditure for learning resources has increased this year and the overall level of support to departments and general school services is having a beneficial impact. The effective use of resources makes a significant contribution to the very good teaching and learning seen. The library is attractive and the books are up-to-date but the stock of 8600 books is rather small for a school of this size. The library is well used by both students and staff. The ratio of pupils to computers overall is nearly 6.5:1, this is good and there is open access for all students. It has been a deliberate policy of the school to increase computer access as opposed to investing in books and the school has already met the Government target for December 2002. Priority areas identified for future planning are to address some of the inevitable limitations of equipment and network capacity.

Efficiency

67. Expenditure on the sixth form, as a proportion of school income, is commensurate with the income received by the school for these students. This money has been spent most effectively on teaching and other resources and has contributed to the recent rise in standards. Staffing, accommodation, and resources are used efficiently in all faculties. The finance officer exercises firm control of expenditure and ensures the smooth running of the accounts. Taking into consideration the students' progress and personal development, and the quality of education they receive, the sixth form is cost-effective and provides very good value for money.

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

In the inspection, 14 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	2	100	53	50	6	3.00	0.97
Communication Studies	1	100	88	-	22	2.00	2.39
Dance	3	100	77	67	41	3.67	2.61
Economics / Business Studies	2	100	69	50	22	4.00	1.91
Geography	1	100	70	-	15	1.00	1.62
German	1	100	83	-	18	2.00	1.95
Mathematics	5	100	63	20	17	3.00	1.56
Other Social Studies	9	33	70	-	18	0.67	1.72
Religious Studies	2	50	76	50	19	2.50	1.96

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art& design	8	100	96	63	45	7.00	6.42
Biology	33	94	88	30	34	5.15	5.28
Chemistry	15	80	89	20	42	4.27	5.87
Communication Studies	17	100	93	29	30	6.35	5.42
Dance	3	100	92	67	50	8.00	6.54
Economics / Business Studies	10	90	88	40	36	7.00	5.41
English Language	2	100	90	-	29	6.00	5.19
English Literature	23	100	96	61	36	7.65	5.90
French	7	100	91	71	39	8.00	5.74
Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Geography	12	100	92	58	37	7.50	5.73
German	9	100	92	78	41	8.44	5.88
History	24	96	89	42	34	6.25	5.43

Mathematics	11	100	89	64	45	7.27	5.99
Music	1	100	93	100	35	8.00	5.72
Other Languages	1	100	94	100	59	10.00	7.07
Other Social Studies	17	82	94	18	59	4.24	5.34
Physics	8	88	88	25	41	5.50	5.72
Religious Studies	9	100	91	56	35	6.89	5.57
Sociology	11	100	88	64	37	6.73	5.46
Spanish	10	100	90	40	40	7.20	5.75

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**. The inspection covered the two A level courses offered by the school. In both courses, Year 12 students take pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. In Year 13 they continue with pure mathematics, but choose between mechanics and statistics.

Strengths

- A level results have improved in recent years and are now well above the national average.
- The standard of work produced by students is high.
- Teaching is good and there is a positive learning ethos in lessons.
- Students are highly motivated and are keen to do well.

Areas for improvement

- Higher-attaining students would sometimes benefit from extended tasks.

68. Results in the GCE A level examinations have improved considerably in the last three years. All students taking the examination have gained pass grades and the proportion gaining A and B grades has been well above the national average. This represents good achievement when related to their GCSE results. There has also been an increase in the take-up of mathematics, although current numbers are not large. Few students who start the course fail to take the examination.

69. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' folders is well above average. They have a clear understanding of algebra and this helps them to handle formulae in mechanics and statistics. For example, in a Year 12 statistics lesson, students applied formulae to find means and standard deviations of data using coding methods. By Year 13, most students have a good knowledge of pure mathematics which enables them to move forward confidently with new work. For example, their understanding of the exponential function helped them to solve equations involving logarithms. All students are helped by the clear and logical way in which they present their solutions.

70. Teaching is good and students learn well. Teaching is carefully planned and lessons have clear objectives. There is a good pace to most lessons, although sometimes there is insufficient challenge to the highest-attaining students. Excellent relationships with students ensure that there is a positive atmosphere in which good learning takes place. Students are well motivated and are keen to understand the work they are doing. They respond well to questioning and clarify their ideas by discussion with teachers and fellow students. The marking and assessment of work is good and students are given clear targets, which helps them to improve their grades.
71. The faculty is well led and managed. The new head of faculty is enthusiastic and committed to raising standards. Appropriate procedures for the monitoring of teaching are in place and provide good support for staff. There is a positive spirit in the faculty and teachers work well together. There are good quality books and resources to support learning.

Sciences

The focus was on biology and chemistry. The school also offers physics at Advanced Level [AL]. For physics, the examination results in recent years up to 2000 have been steady, and in line with national averages. The most recent results for 2001 were much improved.

Biology

Overall the quality of current provision in biology is **very good**. Examination results for 2001 are very good.

Strengths

- Latest results show very marked improvement.
- Leadership effective in wide-ranging steps which are improving standards.
- Teaching and learning are very good

Areas for improvement

- Improve the consistency of the teaching.

72. The GCE A level examination results in 2001 showed very marked improvement over those of the previous year. Results in the three previous years include two years with results well above the national averages and one year (2000) with results broadly in line with the national average. For example, at A level in 2000 almost all students achieved a grade in the A-E range, including 30 per cent with grades A-B. In 2001, 54 per cent attained A-B grades and all students attain at least a D grade. The results in the 2001 AS qualification were impressive: all students passed, including 60 per cent at grades A-B. All those who started AS completed the course. Nineteen out of the 35 AS students have chosen to complete the AL by starting the second year A2 programme. Overall this means that a good number have attained well in a science in their Year 12, and a number have continued biology in Year 13.
73. Students' work is of a very good standard. Students in Year 12 are only three weeks into their AS course. They are successfully moving beyond GCSE levels, such as with their first biological drawings. A student at the borderline of the entry criteria to AS set by the school showed good care and precision, whilst a student with a very high GCSE grade produced very precise, accurate work. The current Year 13 students have already made

substantial steps toward high attainment at A level. Their number and writing skills are very good and they write clear and well-organised essays. The extent of use of information and communication technology is just adequate. Routine notes provide an excellent basis for revision. The unit tests show steady progress over the three terms. Assessed coursework is of high quality. Teachers have exerted a very positive influence to promote these strengths. They guide the notes and the approaches to revision well. Marking is often excellent because it gives detailed prompts which improve students' understanding of biology, and very specific advice which enhances students' ability to meet the criteria of the A level and AS examinations.

74. Students learn very well overall because the majority of teaching is very good, with some excellent teaching in Year 13. The key strengths in teaching are the high level of teachers' subject knowledge and their understanding of the examination requirements. Also, teachers almost always set work which is hard, even in terms of A level. The effect is to inspire students to make very good and sometimes excellent intellectual efforts. As a result, the gains in students' knowledge, skills and understanding are mostly excellent. Some assessment by teachers is less secure. Overall, both high- and relatively low-attaining students have a very good capacity for independent study. Learning in lessons takes place at a very productive pace. There are fine moments when the fascinations of biology are shared between teacher and students. A good example of the many strengths is a lesson in which Year 13 were guided to achieving at the highest level in a lesson on the potentially difficult topic of nerve signal transmission. The teacher progressed, at a very demanding pace, from what students already knew. There was plenty of dialogue, so that both teacher and students could see if progress was secure, and self-testing by students which was then checked with the teacher. Students knew how to maintain high quality notes, largely on their own initiative. They grasped the concepts very well up to the highest requirements for A level, and some had questions which showed they had thoughts beyond that level.
75. The biology section is very well led. The curriculum is planned in full detail. Assessment systems are sufficiently thorough and detailed. The assessment information is used effectively to direct and support the next stages of students' learning through the appropriate setting and monitoring of attainment targets. There is good planning, linked to assessment practice, to make sure the overall curriculum package of AS and A2 suits students needs. The monitoring and evaluation of the provision is good, including lesson quality and oversight of coursework.

Chemistry

Overall the quality of provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**. The most recent results show substantial improvement.

Strengths

- Latest results show substantial improvement.
- Leadership now well aware of how to secure improvements.
- Changes to syllabus being carried through effectively.

Areas for improvement

- Further improve the consistency of teaching and planning of the curriculum.
- Improve the allocation of room resources to meet lesson requirements.
- Improve retention rate between Years 12 and 13.

76. The GCE A level examination results in 2001 showed substantial improvement over the three previous years including two years when they were below national averages and

one year (1999) when they were well above national average. In 2000, 80 percent of students passed but only 20 percent achieved A/B grades; whereas in 2001, all attained at least an E grade and 40 percent achieved A/B grades. The results in the 2001 AS examinations were creditable with only one student graded as unclassified, and 60 per cent graded A-B. All those who started the AS course completed it. Six out of the 15 AS students chose to complete the A level course by starting the second year A2 programme, a disappointing figure which could be improved.

77. The work of the current students is satisfactory. The work sampling focused mostly on the current Year 13 students that is those continuing beyond AS by starting A2. This work shows satisfactory progress from the attainment at GCSE. Quantitative work is usually handled effectively by students. Written work shows competent description and analysis. The use of information and communication technology however, is inconsistent, varying from insufficient to good. Routine notes include some which are very thorough, giving a good basis for revision, and some which are less secure. Overall, the work shows steady improvement over time for all students. For example, draft practice work is used to lead up to assessed practical work. Earlier work undertaken by students varies widely in standard, from sound to careless. Later work is more consistent and of a higher standard. The guide sheets given by staff have been used effectively.
78. Year 12 students were in their third week of the AS course at the time of the inspection. They are making a good transition to AS styles of learning. For example, a group used techniques for analysis which were new to them with very good care for precision and with reasonable understanding of the principles underpinning the procedures.
79. Overall, students learn well in lessons because the teaching is mainly good. Teachers assess students' work well; in lessons they are well aware of strengths and weaknesses in achievement. They make sure that the level of the work set is hard but not unreachable. Students make the intellectual effort needed to reach the standard, and also have a good capacity for independent learning. For example, when Year 13 students analysed the iron content of iron tablets, they resolved many technical and other problems on their own initiative. Students make good use of the advice of teachers to consolidate detail and to confirm their own thinking. A further strength in teaching is that teachers are expert chemists and very well informed about the requirements of the chosen syllabus. Overall, in lessons, students' gains in knowledge and understanding are good.
80. The department has undertaken several changes over the last year. These are benefiting the teaching and learning and consequently the standards in chemistry. The school now uses clear and detailed schemes of work for the courses, based on the introduction of the well-tried framework of the Salter's chemistry course. This includes good opportunities to explore the social and ethical dimensions of science. Some aspects of the accommodation have been improved but weaknesses remain, such as storage of chemicals, and a room that has gas supply only on a side bench.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **very good**. The department provides one course in product design, which also enables students to specialise in graphics.

Strengths

- A and A/S results are well above average and A/S results in the newly adopted product design course include a high proportion of A and B grades.
- Standards in graphical work are high, especially in presentational graphics, and the display of work provides students with important stimulus material.
- Students demonstrate a high degree of innovation in their design work and they produce a range of well-designed and well-made products.
- The new head of department has clear objectives and priorities for the future.
- Teaching and learning skills are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Access to computers is also shared by students outside of the department.
- There is a need to broaden the curriculum, for example, in areas of systems and control and links with science and in graphics.

81. Results last year in the A/S examination were very good and 91 percent of students gained A and B grades. A specialist graphics course at A level has been phased out, but in the most recent examinations 81 percent of students on this course gained A and B grades. A level results reflect substantial gains made in the sixth form in relation to students' qualifications when they begin the course and 'value-added' calculations indicate very good progress.
82. Years 12 and 13 (AS and A level Product Design) were inspected. Attainment in lessons is well above average and work seen during the inspection indicates the use of a wide range of skills and techniques. Student understanding of the design process is good and they are able to develop distinctive individual styles. Some pupils are highly innovative and work on display indicates a variety of ideas and approaches. The GCSE programme of work feeds naturally in to the AS course and students make rapid progress in the early stages. Students work at a good pace and they are clearly interested and involved in their studies. The quality of presentational graphics is very good.
83. In the Year 12 lesson observed attainment was very good. Students demonstrate a high degree of independent learning skill and a range of personal styles. Graphical work is very good and students are able to innovate within the framework set. Even though students are relatively new to the course, they work with confidence and a purpose. The re-design of a guitar project provides students with opportunities to integrate effectively different areas of knowledge and skill. The Year 13 lesson focused on the influences on product design at the time of the Industrial Revolution. Students were well motivated and involved in a dialogue with the teacher; they showed interest, understanding and critical appreciation. They were willing to comment and to question and they enjoyed the teacher input.
84. Students are well motivated and they are keen to produce high quality work. Attitudes are positive and students respond to design project challenges with enthusiasm.

85. Teachers have high expectations and plan their lessons well. The pace of lessons is good and teachers have created a positive learning climate. They are knowledgeable and competent and have good relationships with students. Teaching styles are appropriate and designed to improve standards. Overall the quality of teaching is very good.
86. The head of department who is new to the school is clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. He has clear objectives that include increased monitoring and tracking of pupil progress; continued improvement of standards; broadening the curriculum and a review of schemes of work. Access to computer equipment is sometimes limited. Assessment procedures are detailed and are used to assist individual students to improve their standards of performance.

Economics / Business Studies

Overall, the quality of provision in economics / business studies is **very good**.

Strengths

- Thorough coverage of syllabus requirements
- Challenging targets set for Y12 in respect of their attainment at GCSE and by the end of the A level course.
- Good integration of ICT skills with business theory.
- Good standard of assessed written work.
- Students have very good attitudes towards their work and are very keen to achieve.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of topical examples from real business contexts to elaborate and enliven those provided in the course textbook.
- Provide more helpful guidance and strategies on effective note-taking, particularly for lower-attaining students to enable them to enhance textbook information with current business issues.
- Incorporate a wider theory reference base other than the course textbook in written work.

87. Attainment at A level was well above the national average in 2000. In the summer of 2001, all 14 students passed with grades A-E, with five students attaining the highest grade A. All but one reached their target grades agreed with the school. This indicates an improving trend upwards on past performance. All 15 students entered for AS level in Year 12 passed, with 8 attaining grade A. The number retained between AS and A2 at 94 per cent is impressive.
88. Overall, the standards reached by the current Year 12 students, as seen in lessons, in their written work, and in discussions are about average at this early stage of the course. They are above average in Year 13. Year 12 students are beginning to grasp business theory and use computers competently to support their learning. Those who took the subject at GCSE are building well on their past knowledge. Most make appropriate use of computers. For example, they input formulae to show the percentage increases of various indices from year to year, and convert the data into different graphical formats. However, a few were constrained during the inspection because of computer failure, and a few were unable to construct the correct formulae without support.

89. In lessons, Year 13 students are building on the knowledge gained in Year 12 and use concepts well to explain business practice. For example, they make good connections to the part the Government plays in promoting consumer sovereignty and controlling inflation. They also use correct business terms, such as elasticity, competitiveness and market share in discussions. They word process and structure their ideas well for modular work. In the written work analysed, most make appropriate links between business theory and topical issues when considering ethical problems such as equality of opportunity at work, the growth in popularity of organic products etc. Bibliographies, references, appendices, graphical illustrations and the use of the Internet all enhance the overall standards of this work. However, during the inspection, the vast majority of their theory references were recorded in modules and were taken from the course textbook. This approach limited both the depth and breadth of analysis that students could achieve.
90. In lessons, there is some variation in the quality and expertise with regard to note-taking in both year groups. Some higher-attaining students annotate their homework assignments well, others either fail to take accurate notes, or do not enhance their answers to help them consolidate and extend their learning fully. On the occasions where current business problems are raised which fall outside of the course textbook material, students do not make good enough notes for future revision. The numbers of students staying on between AS and A2 at 94 per cent is impressive and are the best in the sixth form, and most students go on to university on leaving school.
91. Overall, teaching is good. The teachers' subject knowledge, ICT skills and thorough preparation to cover the course requirements underpin students good achievement. Useful exchanges take place between the teacher and students. The teacher also incorporates a suitable range of activities to sustain the students' interests during the lesson – such as whole class interaction, group work, paired and individual work, including answering questions from the textbook. Students respond particularly well to practical tasks and questioning, which draw on their own experience. Question-and-answer sessions that typify the start of most lessons are generally well focused and successful in both probing and extending students' theoretical knowledge in line with the requirements of the syllabus. This has the effect of teasing out some of the detail missed in students' written answers. The teacher occasionally extends students' answers by making reference to current topical issues, but in the main, the theory presented in the course textbook takes precedence. The teacher assesses each piece of written work thoroughly with individual students and provides effective guidance - written and oral - on how to organise and present this work.
92. Students are exceptionally keen to achieve and apply themselves well. They have a mature approach to their work and co-operate well with each other. Most understand what they are asked to do and, where there are difficulties, they provide each other with mutual support or seek further guidance from the teacher. A few are involved in the Young Enterprise scheme, which helps them develop their personal and social skills further.
93. Economics / business studies is part of the science and technology faculty. Leadership and management in business studies are satisfactory. The teacher in charge of economics / business studies agreed appropriate targets – improving the percentage of students achieving higher grades – with the previous head of faculty. The budget is allocated on student numbers and it covers the costs of supplying textbooks to students. There is a little left for the purchase of additional resources such as innovative business software. Targets are set for students on entry into the

sixth form for two years' on. An appropriate evaluation is carried out throughout the course to establish areas of strength and weakness in students' learning, and lesson planning is adjusted accordingly. The department offers good opportunities for students to participate in extra curricular activities such as Young Enterprise, and about a third of students are participating in work experience placements arranged through the school.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The creative arts faculty consists of music, drama, art, physical education and dance. The inspection focussed on art and design and theatre studies. Courses are offered at AS level and A level.

Art and design

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **very good**. It caters for one group of 15 at AS level and one at A level totalling 16 students. The inspection covered the A level course offered by the school.

Strengths

- A level results are above the national average. The standard of work produced by students is high.
- Independent study and research. Students are well motivated and are interested.
- Teaching is very good and on occasion it is excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is cramped and there is a lack of any dedicated sixth form studio space.

94. The GCE A level and AS level results in 2000 were above average, with 63 per cent of students gaining A and B grades and all students passing. Students achieve very well in relation to their levels of attainment on entry to the course. The latest school results at A and AS level indicate a higher entry of students again with 100 per cent pass rate and with 16 students gaining A grades. All students who start the course take the examination.

95. Attainment in lessons is well above average and work seen during the inspection indicates secure knowledge, skills and techniques in a wide range of media. Students research and work well independently and literacy is reinforced well. They are sensitive and responsive to new ideas and approaches. Their own work is influenced by a diverse knowledge of art and design from different periods, cultures and traditions. Work is innovative, exciting and stimulating. Some of the work on display and in portfolios is exemplary. The depth and insight of preparatory studies is often of a high quality.

96. In the Year 12 lessons observed attainment was very good. Students were well grounded in the exploration of ideas and media as a means of visual enquiry and in communication skills. Responses to and interpretations of themes such as flower and fauna, figurative and landscape were innovative, personal and thought provoking. Students chose to work in paint, clay, collage, wire, photography and textiles to express their chosen theme. They experimented confidently with images using graffiti -abstraction - and computer enhanced approaches as well as some of the more traditional approaches such as drawing, painting and three-dimensional modeling.

97. In the Year 13 lessons observed, attainment was very good. Students focused on exploring new skills and media to communicate personal responses to such issues as natural disasters, anorexia, obesity, drug and child abuse. They researched these issues with empathy, understanding and creativity and made connections with the work of other artists such as Christie, Giacometti, Freud, Frink, Modigliani and Moore.
98. In discussion students demonstrated high levels of interest, knowledge and critical appreciation of the work of different artists and different periods. They were articulate, perceptive, well motivated and were thoroughly enjoying their studies. Students' views of the subject are very positive. One said: 'It is my life'.
99. Overall, students learn very well they have a mature approach to their work. Independent learning skills are well developed. The key skills of communication, number and ICT are also well utilised and developed. The quality of teaching is very good and on occasion it is excellent. Teachers are knowledgeable and lesson planning is most effective. They make art interesting and punctuate the lessons with different references to artists, artistic approaches and ideas to try. Teachers have high expectations and students respond well to this. The atmosphere in both art studios is similar to that found on an arts foundation course.
100. The head of department has a clear vision for continuing the high standards achieved and the quality of leadership and management is very good. The curriculum and schemes of work are under constant review and learning objectives closely match course requirements. There are good opportunities for extra-curricular activities and visits to galleries and art events. Assessment is well established, informative and accurate. Students are fully involved in the process and many said how useful individual targets were to help them focus on improvement. Resources including information and communication technology are appropriate and are well maintained and used. The accommodation is cramped for students, nor do they have the benefit of any dedicated sixth form studio area, which can restrict independent study. The school is fully aware of these constraints and has longer-term plans to address these problems, once funds become available. The work on display throughout the school successfully celebrates the students' achievements, and art deservedly has a high profile in the school.

Theatre studies

Overall, the quality of provision in theatre studies is **very good**. The provision in theatre studies caters for one group of nine at AS level and one group of nine at A level. The inspection covered the A level course offered by the school.

Strengths

- Latest school results at A/S-level show that all 10 students passed with 60 percent gaining grades A and B.
- The standard of work produced by students is high.
- Teamwork, student co-operation and their management of one another are all excellent.
- Students are well motivated and are interested.
- Learning is fun and lessons are good humoured and stimulating.
- Teaching is equally good and excellent.

Areas for improvement

- There are no areas which can be significantly improved.

101. The GCE A and AS level results in 2000 were very good, with all students passing and 43 per cent of students gaining A and B grades. Results reflect a similar pattern over the last three years. Students achieve very well in relation to their attainment on entry to the course and their progress is very good. In the most recent examinations, in 2001, a higher number of students were entered, all passed and 60 percent of students achieved A and B grades. All students who start the course take the examination.
102. Attainment in lessons is well above average and work seen during the inspection indicates that students are aware of an increasingly wide range of theatre from different periods. Written work indicates a good understanding of the social and cultural contexts of theatre. In the practical form they acquire new skills and consolidate disciplines learned previously. Strengths are evident in teamwork and students' co-operation and management of one another. Key skills, especially communication with others, are developing well. Students analyse texts, learn theory and apply this knowledge with commitment and originality. Students evaluate their own and other students' work in a positive and constructive manner. Written assignments show excellent use of literacy and ICT.
103. In the Year 12 lessons observed, attainment was very good. Students were studying improvisation-techniques in performance and were evaluating and reflecting on the process. They successfully portrayed both male and female roles, capturing the year, time and character of American G.I's in the Second World War. Their performances were very convincing and showed both moral and spiritual insight. They were able to identify difficulties and strengths in technique. In another lesson, students applied their knowledge of different lighting rigs and stand lights to explore the impact and effects of different lighting. They quickly familiarised themselves with the equipment and set about exploring its function and potential, using specialist terms correctly.
104. In the Year 13 lessons observed, attainment was very good. Students applied their knowledge of Brecht's ideas and techniques using the drumming scene from 'Mother Courage'. Work showed considered insight into Brecht's intentions of setting the scene and exploring gestures and conveying the social and political messages. Students had a wealth of ideas and, in the role of director, they challenged each other and built on their skills and techniques to improve their performance. The quality of the dialogue contributed considerably to their understanding of the contradictions in Brecht's work. At one point, when considering the use of masks to obtain anonymity, one piped up 'Starlight Express meets Brecht!' Students quickly created the illusion once in role. They understood the complexities and built on their knowledge of Brecht as a theatre practitioner to explore epic theatre and acting style in depth. The study resulted in a powerful and emotional performance.
105. In discussion, students demonstrated their keen enthusiasm, knowledge, self-confidence and independence. They understood the different conventions and discussed the different outcomes, relationships, issues and themes. They showed an increasing understanding of the playwright's intentions, the actor-audience relationship and the use of space and production style.
106. Overall, students learn very well; they have a mature and responsive approach to their work. They interact well with each other and are clear when explaining methods

and ideas. They gain insight into their role and understand that, when acting, they have to detach themselves from what they are doing –‘its about the lines not the character’ one said. The quality of teaching was good in half of the lessons seen and excellent in the remaining. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the theory and practice of selected theatre practitioners. Lesson planning is most effective and delivery is often at a brisk pace. The teaching instils a disciplined approach with a high level of challenge and high expectations. The teachers’ sharp focus, knowledge and interpretation of the texts used enables students to achieve high standards. Teaching widens students’ knowledge and experience, for example, when discussing social, political and emotional factors. They explain connections well in practical terms and are critical but helpful. Their passion for the subject and for teaching is the basis of students’ high achievement. Learning is fun and lessons are good humoured and stimulating.

107. The head of department has a strong determination to reach the highest standards and monitors teaching, learning and standards to achieve this. The curriculum and schemes of work are carefully monitored and learning objectives closely match course requirements. There are very good opportunities for extra-curricular activities, drama club, productions and drama theatre and visits. Assessment is informative and accurate. Students are fully involved in this process. They said they found the targeting particularly helpful when used for written assignments. Resources including technology are appropriate, and are well maintained and used. The accommodation is good. Theatre studies and school productions are popular and have a high profile in the school and local community.

HUMANITIES

History

Overall the quality of provision in history is **very good**. The provision in history caters for one group of 18 at AS level and two at A level totalling 31 students.

Strengths

- A level results have been consistently above the national average for the past three years, with an improving trend.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good, with an emphasis of independent learning skills.
- Student attitudes are excellent. They enjoy and take a pride in their work.
- Assessment procedures are excellent, giving students clear guidance as to how to improve.
- Management is very good, providing a well-structured background for teachers’ work.

Areas for improvement

- The size of rooms is not always appropriate for groups being taught.
- Use of visual aids in some lessons could be improved.

108. Standards overall are well above national standards. Performance at A level has been above the national average for the past three years, with a steadily rising trend. In 2000, 42 per cent of students achieved A to B grades. This shows that the high standards that existed at the time of last inspection have been maintained, which is due to the high calibre of management, analysing and correcting any weaknesses in performance as soon as they occur. Students who took AS level in 2001 achieved grades in excess of their targets, showing a very good standard of achievement. The

small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieved at the same rate as other students. Almost all students who took AS level have continued into Year 13.

109. The standard of work seen in lessons and in samples of work is also above average and students achieve very well. They work very hard and take responsibility for their own learning by reading and researching around the periods and individuals they are studying. Students have developed good research skills, drawing on a wide range of primary sources, and they can present detailed and complex arguments about historical motive and interpretation, both orally and in writing. Students' views of the subject are extremely positive; they know that it gives them an excellent basis on which to build a variety of careers.
110. Teaching and related learning are very good overall. Teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding, their very positive relationships with the students, and their very good planning combine to develop habits of independent learning. For example, Year 13 students were working towards their coursework by giving well-researched presentations to the rest of the group about the way society makes heroes of selected historical characters. They were well informed about complex historical political issues and formed firm hypotheses that they defended well in the face of counter arguments from the teacher. In another lesson, Year 12 students were role-playing personalities such as factory owners and social reformers in a debate about whether it should be illegal for children under 12 to work in factories. The only weakness in teaching was that visual aids were not used enough, which was partly the result of poor accommodation, but the students were so positively motivated that this did not affect their rate of learning. Literacy is constantly developed through the need to read effectively, take coherent notes and write well-reasoned essays, and students use ICT particularly well in presenting work and researching on the Internet. Work is always interesting and challenging and more able students are provided with extension studies, as was recommended in the last inspection report.
111. The subject is very ably led, managed and monitored as part of the humanities department. The strong management creates a very good environment for teaching and learning. Teachers are well supported, including the newly qualified teacher in the department, with clear schemes of work and good resources. Assessment procedures are excellent, leaving students in no doubt about how to improve their work at every stage. Since the last inspection, use of ICT has been developed well, providing additional resources for teaching and learning. Accommodation is barely satisfactory because, at present, some groups are too big for the rooms they use, which makes an uncomfortable learning environment. A nearby stock room is used for the secure storage of records.
112. Teaching of the subject is well placed for very good improvements to be continued and for high standards to be maintained.

Geography

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **very good**. The provision in geography caters for one group at A level and two groups at AS level. The number of students opting for the subject at the end of Year 11 has risen from 9 in 2000 to 25 in 2001.

Strengths

- A level results have been well above the national average for the past three years and show an improving trend.
- Teaching and learning are very good, with an emphasis on independent learning skills.
- Assessment procedures are excellent, giving students clear guidance on how to improve.
- Excellent student attitudes and very good relationships with students.
- Management is very good, with a head of department newly in post already having a positive effect on the ethos of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Improvement of visual aids in some lessons.

113. Standards overall are well above national standards. Performance at A level has been well above the national average for the past three years, with a steadily rising trend. In 2000, 58 per cent of students achieved A to B grades. This improvement has been achieved by stricter monitoring of students' progress and targeting of the quality of fieldwork enquiry. The standard of coursework resulting from fieldwork is high, but under the newly-adopted Edexcel A syllabus, students have the option of being examined on their fieldwork instead of presenting it as coursework, which means that their individual strengths are better exploited. Students who took AS level in 2001 achieved grades in excess of their targets, showing a very good standard of achievement. The small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieved at the same rate as other students. Almost all students who took AS level have continued into Year 13. Although it is preferred that students starting the AS level course have a good GCSE grade in the subject, no student is excluded on these grounds as every case is considered individually.

114. The standard of work seen in lessons and in samples of work is also above average and students achieve very well. Note-taking skills are excellent and students can use the Internet to research information, which they will then organise and present to the rest of the class. The process of so doing develops independent learning skills. An example of this was a very good Year 12 lesson, which compared the population structures of countries at different stages of development. Students' views of the subject are extremely positive; they value the practical insights it gives them into the world around them.

115. Teaching and related learning are very good overall. Teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding, their very positive relationships with the students and good planning combine to challenge students and hold their interest. This was seen in an excellent Year 12 lesson about the ordering of river systems in order to compare drainage basins. The only weakness in teaching was a lack of practical visual aids, which would have enlivened some of the complex theory on occasions. Map skills are well developed. Literacy is constantly emphasised through the need to read effectively and take notes. Numeracy is developed through use of graphs to represent statistics. ICT is effectively used in presenting work and researching on the Internet. Work is always interesting and challenging and the more able students are provided with more complex work and resources.

116. The subject is very well led and managed as part of the humanities department. The new head of department has only been in post for a few weeks but already he has a good grasp of the strengths of the department and how improvements might be made, for example some additions to resources. Clear schemes of work provide a supportive framework for teachers. Assessment procedures are excellent, leaving

students in no doubt about how to improve their work at every stage. Since the last inspection use of ICT has been developed well, providing additional resources for teaching and learning. Teaching of the subject is well placed for very good improvements to be continued and for high standards to be maintained.

Sociology

Overall, the quality of provision in sociology is **very good**. The provision in sociology caters for one group at AS level and one at A level. The number of students opting for the subject at the end of Year 11 has fallen in 2001.

Strengths

- A level results have been well above the national average for the last three years with a steadily improving trend.
- Teaching and learning are very good with an emphasis on independent learning.
- Excellent student attitudes and very good relationships with students.
- Very good management.
- Excellent assessment giving students clear guidance on how to improve.

Areas for improvement

- There is no central accommodation available for the subject.
- The number of students opting for the subject is falling.

117. Standards overall are well above national standards. Performance at A level has been well above the national average for the past three years, with a steadily rising trend. In 2000, 64 per cent of students achieved A to B grades. Students who took AS level in 2001 achieved grades in excess of their targets, showing a very good standard of achievement. The small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve at the same rate as other students. Almost all students who took AS level have continued into Year 13. Students from all ability levels can take the course, thus expanding their opportunities, and many go on to study sociology at university.

118. The standard of work seen in lessons and in samples of work is also above average and students achieve very well. From a base of no prior experience of the subject, they quickly begin to learn about the complexities of sociological theory. Coursework is of a good standard, showing a developing grasp of research methods and the ability to form hypotheses, conduct research and draw credible conclusions. Students learn the habit of independent study through discovering facts and reporting back to the rest of the group. For example in a Year 12 lesson on the education system in Britain, each had a different historical time to research in order to contribute to a composite time line. Students' views of the subject are extremely positive; they believe it to be a very useful addition to their studies.

119. Teaching and related learning are very good overall. Teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding, their very positive relationships with the students and their very competent planning combine to challenge students and hold their interest. In an excellent Year 12 lesson about the structure of families and households, the teacher combined her own challenging ideas with the students' experiences to lead a stimulating discussion. Literacy is constantly developed through the need to read effectively, write essays and take notes. Numeracy is developed through use of graphs and statistics. ICT is used well in presenting work and researching on the Internet. Work is always interesting and challenging.

120. The subject is very well led and managed as part of the humanities department. Schemes of work are in place and progress is monitored by the teacher in charge of the subject. Excellent assessment procedures leave students in no doubt about how to improve their work at every stage. The only weakness in provision is the lack of a permanent accommodation base, which means that teachers have to carry books to a variety of venues around the school. This limits the available resources and has a negative effect on the status of the subject. Also the number of students opting for the subject is falling. Sociology was not reported on in the last inspection, so no points for improvement were raised.

Psychology

Overall, the quality of provision in psychology is **good**. Over the last five years, psychology has moved from being a subject taken in students' own time to being one of the most popular subjects in both Years 12 and 13. Numbers have risen dramatically with staff changes in September 2000 and results are improving. In general they have been below the national average for all schools.

Strengths

- Results showed a marked improvement this summer and were in line with national averages. Students have good knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and apply and analyse them thoroughly in class work and in answering questions, and overall achieve well.
- Teaching is very good overall; lessons are very well structured with a strong consideration of differing learning styles, the demands of examinations and the value of enhancing understanding through consideration of real life situations.
- The subject is very well led and high quality planning provides good support for the work of non-specialists.

Areas for improvement

- Analysis of student achievement is yet to be related to prior strengths or weaknesses at GCSE.
- The spelling policy has yet to be implemented.

121. The most recent results in 2001 were in line with the national average and nearly a third of A level grades were A or B, in line with national results and almost twice as good as past school results. While cognitive psychology remains an area of particular challenge, past performance was similar in all areas of the syllabus and in coursework. 2001 results showed overall improvement in all aspects, attributable to changes in staffing for the school year 2000/2001.
122. The evidence from work seen in lessons, in students' files and from draft coursework during the inspection, shows that standards are rising for all students including the most gifted. Standards are now above average overall. Standards in psychology in Year 13 are above the national expectations. All students, whatever their level of prior attainment, achieve well. Secure knowledge and understanding were demonstrated of both the psychological and biological aspects of studies of schizophrenia.

123. Attainment in Year 12 is also above average. All students make good progress and achieve standards above those expected at an early stage in an AS course. They show good knowledge and understanding of the topics covered thus far. For example, the concepts of normality and abnormality were already integrated into the ability to relate them to the students' own culture and sub-cultures.
124. The sixth form teaching overall is very good. High expectations encourage students to give of their best. Most lessons are very good and none are unsatisfactory. The very best teaching is inspirational and imaginative to produce deep-seated understanding and excitement about the subject, for example in the teaching of abnormality through self-testing and unusual teacher attire. All lessons are carefully planned with reference to case studies and usually with implications for answering examination questions. Teachers give students plenty of practice in the differing examination techniques required for AS level short answers, as against the continuing emphasis of A level in Year 13 on essay writing techniques. This has already had a beneficial impact on examination and module results in both years. All lessons have clear learning objectives and the knowledge and understanding objectives are always shared with the students. However, this is not always the case with regard to the objectives relating to application and analysis. Lessons finish by establishing firmly what the students have learnt, and usually this comes naturally from the students themselves. Good use is made of both core textbooks and a range of other sources, and distance learning is being skilfully introduced in Year 12. Lessons proceed at a very good pace, and teachers work hard to challenge students appropriately, whatever their prior attainment.
125. The subject fascinates students, even where they are just a few weeks into the course. By Year 13 they have learned to make optimum use of their time, both in class and through homework and private study time. They work sensitively and enthusiastically either individually, in groups or in whole class discussions, and can sustain and develop their views very competently. They have good research skills and can interpret statistical information with confidence. They are competent in working with information and communication technology, including searching websites. Students have the confidence to ask questions, and query what teachers provide, so that they gain secure knowledge and understanding. They listen, reflect and learn. This secures good progress and higher-attaining students demonstrate exceptional skills in bringing together understanding of differing aspects of psychology with that from other subjects, particularly biology and history. Year 13 students use marking criteria to assess each other's work to increase their awareness of what examiners expect.
126. The subject benefits from a talented specialist subject leader with a proper grasp of the demands of the subject itself and of how it is examined. Non-specialist teachers are supported effectively by a detailed scheme of work and a strong framework for short-term planning. This has resulted in effective changes to teaching and learning styles since September 2000, which are improving students' skills in the subject. There is a striking emphasis on lesson planning which comprehends the range of learning styles of the psychology students, and helps ensure that they derive the maximum benefit from what the courses provide. Psychology is now a very effectively taught and highly popular subject.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **very good**. The English department caters for some 130 students. GCE A level and AS level courses are offered in English literature, English language and media studies. All courses were sampled during the inspection.

Strengths

- In 2000, results at A level in English literature and media studies were well above the national average. There was a 100 percent success rate for a smaller number of students who followed the English language course.
- Levels of attainment are well above average. They have improved significantly since the time of the last inspection.
- Students reach particularly high standards in written work.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers know their subject very well and have a good understanding of students' learning needs.
- The three courses on offer provide good variety and choice for students.

Areas for improvement

- There is a continuing need to develop strategies to improve independent learning skills, supported by appropriate resources – books and new technology.
- Technical facilities for media studies should be updated, to support an increasing emphasis on practical work in the subject.

127. Standards in English on entry to the sixth form are well above average, reflecting the pattern of high attainment at GCSE in the subject. In 2000, results at A level in English literature and media studies were well above the national average. There was a 100 percent success rate for a smaller number of students who followed the English language course. In 2000, 61 per cent of students achieved A to B grades. Over the previous three-year period, attainment levels improved consistently – though they have always been above average. In 2001, results were slightly lower overall in English literature and language. This is largely explained by a different ability profile in the year group. For the first time in recent years, two students failed to obtain pass grades: one in A level language, one in AS level literature. The AS results were out of step with the school's expectations, however, and are under review with the examining board. But there was a further improvement in results for media studies this year at A level. At AS level, over 90 percent of students gained A or B grades in the subject at the end of Year 12. Numbers of students have increased markedly since 1998, when English language and media studies were introduced. Retention rates are very good for all courses.

128. Work seen during the inspection confirms these standards. Reading skills are highly developed in the interpretation and evaluation of both literary and non-literary texts. In a Year 13 poetry appreciation class, students responded sensitively to a close consideration of diction and imagery in poems they were reading for the first time. In an English language lesson, another group commented with some perception on a text from a theatre programme describing Restoration London in a modern idiom. They were able to define the impact of anachronisms employed and, after only a short period of reflection, focused well on effects created by syntax and choice of language. Extended analytical and critical writing is a strength. In English literature, the majority of students are able to analyse in some depth character, theme and use of language in the novels, plays and poetry studied. Ideas are justified well by

detailed reference to the text. Coursework essays are based on a wide range of literature, reflecting students' personal choice and response. Coursework projects for media studies were particularly impressive. Work on an advertising campaign for confectionary products, for example, was thoroughly researched and developed, with careful evaluation of different approaches to the campaign. Students were able to use technical vocabulary with understanding. Folders were presented to a high standard, with students making good use of ICT skills in word processing and graphical displays to create a polished end product.

129. The achievement of individual students is good at both A and AS level and very good for AS media studies students in 2001. The great majority reach or exceed their target grades in examinations, based on expectations derived from GCSE grades. Because many start their course at a high standard, the scope for greater quantifiable progress is limited in some cases. However, students of all abilities respond to the quality of teaching with effort and thought. They clearly work hard throughout their courses.
130. Teaching of A level English and media studies is very good. Teachers know their subject very well, and are able to communicate their enthusiasm for it. Very good, friendly relationships are developed between staff and students. Teachers' expectations of students are high, however, especially over the range and development of written work. Lessons are well planned, using a range of organisational strategies to generate interest. In one or two instances, the time allocated to specific activities could have been defined and observed more clearly. Some loss of focus in students' efforts resulted. But one Year 12 media studies lesson, on the tabloid press and celebrity, was particularly well paced and varied, with a mixture of whole class and group discussions, combined with presentations from students and the teacher. Students were clearly engaged by the work, and motivated by the variety of approach.
131. The quality of teaching helps to promote very good learning. Overall, students make a very good contribution to discussions, and most are prepared to put forward ideas and are able to justify their opinions with some perceptiveness. In some groups, contributions are more effective when thoughts are prepared and presented more formally. Students here lack confidence in presenting their own thoughts spontaneously. The school already does much to encourage all students to develop independent learning skills, through their own reading, note-making and research, but a still greater emphasis would help lower-attaining and more reticent students to make further progress.
132. Assessment of students' work is very good. Teachers give prompt and constructive feedback, making extensive written comments on essays and projects against the detailed assessment criteria for the subject. Assessment criteria are also used explicitly to guide teaching, to focus students' efforts more clearly and to improve evaluation of their own achievement. Teachers monitor students' progress carefully and are prepared to give additional personal help and guidance where it is needed. Progress is reviewed each term and targets for improvement agreed. There are no students with special educational needs enrolled on courses, but those with more difficulty in coping with literacy skills are given appropriate help. Students feel well supported and value the staff's work, not least in organising extra-curricular activities, including theatre trips and talks from visiting speakers. Some 40 students took part in a three-day residential visit to Stratford at the beginning of the autumn term.

133. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Teaching rooms are spacious and well presented, though most are housed in temporary accommodation. The furniture may be re-arranged flexibly, and there is ready access to TV, video and other equipment. There is a range of resources, including CD-Rom and software packages, to support independent learning, but these could be developed further. The range of relevant books in the library is limited, and does not support students' work effectively. The department has also identified the need to update its technical equipment for media studies, to support the increasing emphasis on practical work in the course.
134. Leadership and management of English are very good. Whilst standards are already high, there is no complacency in the department. The department's action plan sets a clear educational direction for its work at A level, with a strong emphasis on raising levels of attainment and evaluating strategies for teaching and learning. Teachers are committed to continuing improvement. They collaborate closely to share good practice. Staff training and development are supported well. In particular, importance is attached to keeping up-to-date with changes in examination and assessment requirements at this level.

Modern foreign Languages

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**. The focus of the inspection was on French and Spanish. Both subjects attract healthy numbers of students to study AS and A level, particularly French. Included in the French inspection was a Year 12 Foreign Languages At Work (FLAW) class, part of the Languages for All course.

Strengths

- A-level results in French are well above average and are above average in Spanish.
- French and Spanish sit well in a strong Modern languages faculty, which has obtained "language college" status for the school.
- Teaching is good in Spanish and very good in French. Staff have very strong subject knowledge.

Areas for improvement

- Knowledge of grammatical structures such as verb tense formation, agreements and use of accents is not as sure as it might be.
- Students' ability to speak independently in the foreign language, though improved since the previous inspection, can significantly be further developed.

135. Over the last three years, all students entered for A level in both languages have passed. The numbers of students have grown at the same time. In 2001, the number of higher grades (A or B) in French was about double the national average: an excellent result. In Spanish, the higher grades, too, have moved from the average to comfortably above. The results from the new AS level in 2001 were mixed: those in French were quite good but those in Spanish were weak, especially at the higher grades. Although retention rates are good, the new AS level was designed to attract more one-year students than would have opted for a full A level course. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files during the inspection shows that standards of attainment and levels of achievement are consistently good. Frequently, standards are well above the national average and students' achievement is beyond expectations for this stage in their course.
136. Students in Year 12 have only just started their AS courses and do not yet possess the confidence that is evident in Year 13. Nevertheless, they are already at ease with

the foreign language; they possess a solid vocabulary base and are able to express themselves orally and in writing with a fair degree of clarity. A wide ability range is apparent in written work, in which there is evidence of a gradual maturing of ideas. Where students respond positively to lively teaching, they produce French or Spanish of high quality.

137. In Year 13, students demonstrate reasonably good recall of previously learned language, which they are highly skilled at re-using in new contexts. Aided by a strong group dynamic, students often engage in discussions in which use of the foreign language is not only completely natural and fluent but where the language produced is of an increasingly complex nature. In written work, students are generally able to pursue a logical sequence of ideas or argument and to express the same cogently. There is a maturity to the flow of language written by the best students. Relatively weaker students rely more on description than on discursive writing.
138. In both Year 12 and Year 13, written work shows up weaknesses with regard to the formation of tenses.
139. In the sixth form, the teaching of French is very good and the teaching of Spanish is good. No teaching is less than good and occasionally it is excellent. There is a very close correlation between the quality of the teaching and the learning and progress made by the students. Teachers have to work very hard to overcome students' natural passivity. All the teachers are first-rate linguists who use the foreign language to the full. The pace of the well-planned lessons is purposeful; no time is wasted and students are kept working throughout. Teachers have high expectations of their students, with whom relationships are good, and the degree of challenge is appropriate to advanced-level work. In the best lessons, learning is enhanced by teaching that is lively and fun and which demands independent thinking and language production by the students. This is an area, in general, where students can be given many more opportunities to practise the language for themselves and, consequently, to take more responsibility for their own linguistic development.
140. The great majority of students show positive attitudes to their work and their teachers; they are quiet, attentive and concentrate well. There is a tendency, however, to rely on the teacher to create overt motivation. Nonetheless, when positively encouraged to be so, students are lively and they work increasingly well together. When this happens, learning is of much greater quality and progress is clearly enhanced.
141. French and Spanish are part of a vibrant Modern Foreign Languages Faculty which, having obtained language college status, has a strong profile in the school. While the heads of department of French and Spanish are relatively inexperienced in post, they are led well and supported by the experienced head of faculty with whom they share a strong sense of educational direction. Very good progress has been made since the previous report and the issues raised then no longer apply.