

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HARTISMERE HIGH SCHOOL**

Eye

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124810

Headteacher: Richard Hewitt

Reporting inspector: Michael Lovett  
3695

Dates of inspection: 14 - 17 January 2002

Inspection number: 191367

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Castleton Way  
Eye  
Suffolk

Postcode: IP23 7BL

Telephone number: 01379 870315

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr P Miles

Date of previous inspection: 13 January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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3695	Michael Lovett	Registered inspector		How high are standards? The effectiveness of leadership and management in the sixth form
19436	Michael O'Malley	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development The school's care for its students How well does the school work in partnership with parents and students?
12973	Guy Dickens	Team inspector	English	Curricular and other opportunities for students
32086	Joy Bond	Team inspector	Mathematics	
2348	Marianne Ellender-Gelé	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	How well are students taught?
7202	Elizabeth Hale	Team inspector	Business Studies Economics	
12968	Jon Parker	Team inspector	Design and Technology	
12959	Mick Revell	Team inspector	Biology Physics	
12957	John Stout	Team inspector	Geography	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Hartismere High is a small comprehensive school with 779 boys and girls aged 11 to 18. It serves a largely rural area around Eye. The sixth form was created as recently as 1996, yet is well established with 149 students on roll. Virtually all pupils have a white ethnic background. Twenty-four pupils have significant special educational needs; twenty of these have statements. Most have dyslexia; three have a physical impairment and two Aspergers' syndrome. Eighty-five other pupils have less significant learning or behavioural difficulties. Pupils' attainment on entry is well above the national average. Three per cent of pupils are entitled to free meals. Socio-economic circumstances are very advantageous.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The school is very effective. Very good leadership has established an ethos that promotes learning and achievement in a friendly and caring environment. Teaching is consistently successful in engaging pupils' interest, sustaining their commitment and preparing them well for examinations. Pupils respond very well and their attitudes are excellent. Operating costs per pupil are above average because the school is small, but the outcomes are good, so the school gives appropriate value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Examination results are well above average in the tests at age 14 and at GCSE.
- Pupils make more than usual gains in achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships, concentration and perseverance are of a high order.
- Leadership is very good, focusing on the key priorities of school achievement and ethos
- Teaching is consistently effective.
- Pupils' social and moral development are very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- Attendance has fallen to the national average and there are no systems in place to improve it.
- Information and communication technology is little used across subjects to support learning.
- Very little attention is given to pupils' spiritual development.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in January 1997. Improvement since then has been good. Examination results have risen faster than the national trend. The amount of sound or better lessons has risen from 85 per cent to 94 per cent. The sixth form has become well established with high standards. Leadership and management issues have been resolved. Satisfactory progress has been made in provision for special educational needs. Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) has improved because all pupils in Years 7 to 11 now have a course in it, but there has been little progress in using ICT across the curriculum. Boys are reaching A and A\* GCSE grades in some subjects, and other subject teams have plans to achieve this. Spiritual development is still unsatisfactory, and the requirement for daily collective worship remains unfulfilled.



## 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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A	

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

Results in the national tests in English, mathematics and science at age 14 are well above national averages. Compared with similar schools, results are well above average in mathematics and science, but are broadly average in English. Results are improving in line with the national trend. They represent the amount of progress expected, given pupils' high attainment when they start here in Year 7.

Recent results at GCSE are well above the national average. They are above the average for similar schools. Judged against their test results at age 14, pupils' GCSE results are well above what is achieved nationally. All pupils gained five or more grades A\* to G in 2001, placing the school in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally for this measure. Girls' results are very high, and boys' are well above average. Results are rising faster than the national trend. Compared with other subjects in the school, GCSE results in 2001 were best in science and history and, for boys, in English literature. Results were below other subjects in art and design and drama and, for boys, in French, German and physical education.

The school has set appropriately high targets. It exceeded its target of 64 per cent gaining five or more A\*-C GCSEs by reaching 71 per cent. The target for 2002 is 75 per cent. It slightly exceeded its GCSE points target of 48.0 by reaching 48.7; the 2002 target is 51.0. The target for all pupils to gain at least one GCSE pass is met.

A-level and GNVQ results in the sixth form were well above average in 1999 and 2000 and, although a little lower, were still well above average in 2001. Chemistry and history have had the best results relative to other subjects. All subjects achieve at least average results compared with schools nationally. In 2001, results in art and design, biology, English and design and technology were above average. In the new AS level examinations in 2001, particularly good results were achieved in mathematics.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils are highly motivated and keen to learn. They work hard and concentrate well in lessons. Many take part in extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils are quick to follow instructions and keen to please. They are trustworthy and courteous around the school. There is little bullying and, when it occurs, it is dealt with quickly.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is very good. Pupils respond well to the many opportunities to take initiative and responsibility outside class, yet there are too few opportunities for this in lessons. Relationships are excellent.
Attendance	Satisfactory. It is broadly in line with the national average. Punctuality is good.

Apart from attendance, the above aspects are highly significant strengths of the school which are cherished by management, staff, governors and parents. They provide an atmosphere in which pupils mature and learn with confidence and enjoyment. Attendance has fallen from previously high levels.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	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 consistently effective, with nearly all lessons sound or better and two thirds good or better. Over one in five were very good or better. Teaching of English, mathematics and science is good. Pupils' start at the school with high levels of basic literacy and numeracy skills, and teaching builds on this effectively. Learning proceeds at a good pace and pupils apply themselves well. Weakness are that pupils are not always given enough time to apply creative effort, or to exercise independence in exploring within the topic, or to reflect on the quality of what they have done. The few weaker lessons suffered from inadequate planning, unfocused work or too much instruction from the teacher, with too little learning activity for the pupils. Those with special educational needs are taught literacy and numeracy well in their special support lessons.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The standard range of subjects is enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. ICT is not used enough in learning across the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Procedures to identify needs are effective. Support for learning is managed well and subject teachers are kept informed of pupils' individual special requirements.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very occasionally, individual pupils have English as a second language. The school provides appropriate support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Social and moral development are very well supported. Adults set good role models. Pupils are well aware of their own cultural background, and have an adequate understanding of some other cultures. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. The requirement for collective worship is not met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Teachers know pupils very well and the school works effectively to meet their needs. Procedures for child protection, health and safety are satisfactory. Monitoring and promotion of attendance are unsatisfactory.

The usual range of subjects is usefully supplemented by a vocational course in leisure and tourism and the Youth Award scheme for pupils not likely to benefit from a full GCSE programme. Extra-curricular activities are a particular strength; they contribute well to pupils' social and cultural development, as well as improving their sports, health and fitness potential. Planning for the new citizenship curriculum is at a very early stage. ICT is not used sufficiently across the curriculum to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum for each subject. In the sixth form, students have access to a good range of academic AS and A2 level qualifications, but there is little alternative for students of average attainment or below.

The strengths in social and moral development contrast with a weakness in spiritual development. Opportunities are missed for pupils' personal reflection on and response to the meaning and value of what happens to people and important issues in the world around them.

A strength is the use of assessment data to set high expectations for individual pupils and monitor their progress towards targets. This is operating successfully in the sixth form. Preparations for similar work in Years 10 and 11 are well advanced. Attendance is not monitored systematically, and little has been done to reverse the decline to average levels.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Highly effective leadership by the headteacher and senior colleagues has created a happy school community, an excellent learning ethos and continually improving academic standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors support the school well. They have yet to develop a clear, shared view of where the school is heading.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Internal evaluation is good, but more could be done to compare performance with similar schools.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Funding has been directed to set up the sixth form, which is a key strategic priority. Owing to changes in membership, the current governing body has yet to consider how spending patterns compare with those in other schools.

Key strengths are the energy and enthusiasm of the headteacher and senior staff, who have the full confidence and support of a very good team of teachers and other staff. Together they create with pupils a very successful learning community, with high and improving educational standards as the focus. This is enhanced by a rich and varied provision of extra-curricular activities, visits, sports, musical and dramatic productions. An area to improve is the evaluation of past performance, and the comparison of key data, against that of other similar schools.

Accommodation, whilst pleasant, is barely adequate. Music and science do not have enough teaching space. An imminent building project should alleviate this situation. The newer buildings are of good quality. Learning resources in the main school have been squeezed as the sixth form has developed. For example, below-average provision of computers and poor access to the Internet restricts pupils' use of up-to-date research resources. Best value is sought when making purchases.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children are making good progress.</li> <li>• The school expects their children to work hard and behave well.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be better informed about how their children are getting on.</li> <li>• The school to work more closely with them.</li> <li>• The amount of homework.</li> </ul>

The large majority of parents is very satisfied with the school and appreciates it very much. The concerns in the right hand column above are raised by a small minority of parents.

Inspectors confirm parents' positive views. Information provided about progress is satisfactory. Parents can meet formally with staff annually, following the issue of reports.

Parents are invited to other meetings when there are concerns. The new style of computer-generated reports meet statutory requirements but some parents do not like them. Arrangements for intermediate reporting are currently being improved. Some information, including effort grades, is recorded in pupils' planner diaries. Inspectors found no evidence to support parents' concerns about the school not working closely with them. It is easy to contact the teachers and the school responds to parents' concerns positively and readily. The school is quick to involve parents with any issues that arise. The arrangements for homework are good. It is set regularly and makes a good contribution to pupils' learning and achievements.

## **ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM**

## **HARTISMERE HIGH SCHOOL**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form was created in 1996 and has grown from 126 students in 1999 to 149 now. There are about equal numbers of boys and girls in Year 13, and three girls to every two boys in Year 12. Virtually all students are of white ethnic background. About 60 per cent of Year 11 stay on to the sixth form. They are joined by between five and ten students transferring from other schools, mainly from Debenham, an 11-16 school some ten miles distant. There are five international exchange students. There is a very good range of 17 courses leading to AS and A2 examinations and two Advanced vocational qualifications (AVCEs), in business and health and social care, and Intermediate GNVQ business. Students also have tutor time and access to the general studies examination course. There are few courses for students of average attainment or below.

### **HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

This is a good, effective sixth form. Students have excellent attitudes and benefit from the wide range of advanced courses. Examination results have been well above average in recent years and, although a little lower, were still well above average in 2001. Achievement is in keeping with students' good GCSE performance prior to sixth form studies. There are small teaching groups in some subjects and large ones elsewhere, but there is no evidence that this detracts from achievement. The cost of the sixth form is greater than the budget allocated to the school, which squeezes resources in the main school. However, the faster-than-average rise in standards at age 16 shows that this has had little impact. The existence of a good sixth form on site has had a significant impact on raising the aspirations of younger pupils. The result is that the stay-on rate into advanced study has steadily increased.

#### **Strengths**

- Examination results have been above or well above average in each of the past three years.
- Teaching is consistently effective; teachers give much additional time to assist students' learning.
- Students' commitment and attitudes are excellent.
- Day-to-day feedback and monitoring of students' progress.
- High quality planning of courses so that they meet the examination board's specifications.

#### **What could be improved**

- There are too few courses for students of average attainment or below.
- Teaching styles give limited opportunity for students to investigate, research or be creative.
- There is insufficient access to and use of ICT.

*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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Provision is good.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching overall is good. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and use this to help students make progress.
Biology	<b>Provision is very good.</b> A-level results and standards in lessons are above average, which results from vibrant teaching and very good subject management. Students learn well in a variety of ways.
Physics	<b>Provision is satisfactory.</b> A-level results and standards in lessons are above average. Teaching is satisfactory and there are some good opportunities for gifted physics students.
Design & technology	<b>Provision is good.</b> Results are above average. Teaching is good and students are making good progress in both the AS and A2 courses.
Business Studies	<b>Provision is good.</b> Results for most courses are above average. Teaching is good, with students making good progress. A high proportion of students completes the course.
Economics	<b>Provision is satisfactory.</b> A-level results and standards in lessons overall are in line with the national average, with some students working at above average standards. Teaching and learning is good.
Geography	<b>Provision is very good.</b> Recent A-level standards are average. Teaching is very good. Pupils work hard and achieve well.
English	<b>Provision is good.</b> Results are consistently above average, particularly in English Literature. Teaching and learning are both good, and effective use is made of assessment to improve learning.
French	<b>Provision is satisfactory.</b> Results at AS and A-level are above average. Current students are making steady progress in Year 12 but their speaking is hesitant. Progress in Year 13 is good. Teaching is satisfactory.
German	<b>Provision is satisfactory.</b> Results at AS and A-level are above average. Current students in Year 12 are making good progress in all skills. Teaching is satisfactory. There are no students in Year 13 at present.

Lessons in chemistry, history and art were not inspected in depth. Examination results in these subjects are very good and represent strengths of the sixth form.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	There are good systems for advice and guidance, including advance information about sixth form courses, induction, further education and careers. Assessment is regular, clear and helpful, so students know how well they are getting on and how to improve to achieve their best.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Strengths lie in the excellent ethos that has been created for learning, achievement and good relationships. Senior managers have set up a very good system for tracking students' progress against their potential. Combined with the high quality marking, feedback and advice about their work, this promotes students' improvement and high standards effectively. Planning of the course content is particularly well done. Relative weaknesses are a lack of focus on monitoring teaching and staff training to ensure the most effective teaching strategies are used, and insufficient access and use of ICT.

## 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"> <li>• They are taught well and challenged to do their best.</li> <li>• Teachers are accessible to give help with any difficulties.</li> <li>• Their work is thoroughly assessed so they know how to improve.</li> <li>• They are kept well informed of their progress.</li> <li>• The school helped them to settle into the sixth form well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice on what courses to study.</li> <li>• Advice about what they should do when they leave school.</li> <li>• The small range of activities and enrichment courses outside their main subjects.</li> <li>• They could be treated more like responsible young adults.</li> </ul>

A small proportion of students (22 per cent) returned questionnaires. The strength of positive views far outweighed the negative. Inspectors confirm students' positive views. They disagree about the advice given, which is good, both for careers and about what to study. Inspectors agree about the range of activities, which has been reduced because the introduction of the new AS courses has led to the school dropping the weekly 'activities' afternoon from curricular time. However, there is a good range of extra-curricular activity and students get involved with community service and work experience. Personal and social education and general studies offer some limited enrichment beyond the main courses. The vast majority of students spoken to felt they were treated like 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**

#### **Results are well above average in the tests at age 14 and at GCSE.**

- 1 Taken as a whole, pupils' attainment when they start at Hartismere is well above the national average. The school builds on this, and pupils go on to attain correspondingly high results in the Year 9 national tests, at GCSE and in the sixth form. GCSE results are rising faster than the national trend.
- 2 Results in the Year 9 tests are well above the national average and are rising in line with the national trend. Compared with schools with similar small numbers of pupils eligible for free meals, Hartismere pupils regularly obtain well-above-average results in Year 9 in mathematics and science, but variable results in English. A dip in English results in 1999 has been recovered, and these are now in line with those in similar schools. That same group of pupils, in sharp contrast, did well in their GCSE English language and literature examinations in 2001, with 66 per cent reaching grades A\* to C and 21 per cent gaining A\* or A grades in language; a creditable 80 per cent gained A\* to C grades in literature. Although the teaching of English is good, it is unlikely to have caused such a dramatic reversal alone. The school attributes the apparent swing to inconsistencies in the national assessment tests in English at age 14.
- 3 Mathematics and science continue to be strengths, both in Year 9 and at GCSE. In mathematics, 72 per cent of pupils gained A\* to C grades in 2001. In science, 74 per cent gained A\* to C grades and a remarkable 22 per cent gained A\* or A grades. This is achieved through good teaching and learning, and the positive attitudes sustained by pupils. Many other subjects, including history, geography and design and technology, consistently achieve GCSE results that are above average. In 2001, compared with their other GCSE subjects, pupils did not do as well in art and design, and boys did not do so well in German, French and physical education.
- 4 Results in the sixth form are good. In 1999 and 2000 they were well above the national average. Although slightly lower, they were still well above average in 2001. Results are high in chemistry and history, and above average in most years in biology, art and design, English, mathematics and physics. No subject is below average. An area for improvement is for the school to use measures of progress to evaluate students' actual results against the projections that can be made from prior performance at GCSE. Results in the new AS level examinations, taken for the first time in 2001 at the end of Year 12, are good. Mathematics results were especially encouraging with nearly three quarters of the students gaining a grade A and the others a grade C. The newness of the examination system means there is no foundation of historical data by which to analyse performance.

#### **Pupils make more than usual gains in achievement in years 10 and 11.**

- 5 Through Years 7 to 9, by virtue of good teaching and the school's learning ethos, pupils make the progress that is expected of them. They attain appropriate, well above average results in the National tests at the end of Year 9. The pupils then go on to make particularly good progress through Years 10 and 11, compared with schools with similar test results at the end-of-Year-9 starting point. The school is in

the top quarter of such schools nationally for this progress measure. When compared with schools with similar small numbers of pupils eligible for free meals, this school also does well; it is in the top 40 per cent of such schools nationally.

### **Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships, concentration and perseverance.**

- 6 Pupils' attitudes to school are excellent. They like school and willingly take part in what the school has to offer. Many pupils engage in the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, music, and drama. Similarly, pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are highly motivated, eager to please and concentrate well in lessons. They are highly committed to their studies. They work hard and persevere to ensure they meet the high standards expected.
- 7 Pupils' behaviour is excellent; this has a significant impact on the quality of relationships and their learning. For example, because the pupils are trustworthy and show respect for each other's and school property, they are given full access to the school buildings during break times. The vast majority of pupils behave well in class; this means that there are hardly any distractions from learning. There is little bullying and it is quickly addressed. The rate of exclusions is low.
- 8 Pupils' personal development is very good. They are polite, thoughtful and helpful. They work well in pairs and groups such as in music, where they share instruments, and in science investigations. They have learned to listen, to think, and to consider the consequences of what they do. They are quick to apologise when they have offended others. They respect each other's contributions and support each other productively, with kindness and sensitivity. For example, in Year 11 geography, pupils discussed policies for population control. They listened attentively to each other's contributions and built on each other's ideas. In this way, they developed their debating skills and grasped new concepts very quickly.
- 9 Relationships are excellent. This has a particularly positive effect on pupils' learning. Teachers have a good rapport with pupils, both in and out of class. The pupils are confident to raise questions and concerns. There is mutual respect and pupils are keen to please their teachers. Adults set very good role models.

### **Leadership is very good, focusing on the key priorities of school achievement and ethos.**

- 10 Leadership is very good. The highly effective team of headteacher and senior colleagues has created a happy school community, an excellent learning ethos and continually improving academic standards. Key strengths are the energy and enthusiasm of the headteacher and senior staff, who have the confidence and support of a very good team of teachers and other staff. Together they create with pupils a very successful learning community, with high and improving educational standards as the focus. The features that make this successful are:
  - the care and attention offered to all members of the school community as individuals;
  - open communications, with frequent contact between managers, staff and pupils;
  - an upbeat, encouraging and supportive tone;
  - a clear expression of the school's aims and values; and
  - an aspiration for pupils to participate in and enjoy all that life has to offer.

- 11 The development plan is well targeted at priorities to continue to develop the effectiveness of teaching staff, further raise pupils' performance, improve the use of ICT across the curriculum and manage building projects.
- 12 The school's evaluation of its performance is satisfactory. Internal evaluation is good and includes an annual review exercise with each department. More could be done to compare performance with that of similar students in other schools. Areas to improve are the evaluation of examination results and the comparison of key performance measures against those of similar schools.
- 13 Governors are very supportive and generous with the time they devote to the school. They have yet to develop a clear, shared view of where the school is heading. Governors seek good value for money when making purchases. Owing to changes in membership of the governing body, the principle of comparison with similar schools is not well established. For example, current governors have only recently made comparisons of key resource indicators, such as the proportion of teachers' time spent in class, the pupil-teacher ratio, and the proportion of budget spent on each main expenditure heading. Governors have not monitored pupils' attendance sufficiently closely. The strategic use of resources is satisfactory. Funding has been directed to set up and sustain the sixth form, which has been a key strategic priority. The school uses its budget fully. A small overspend in 2000/01 has been reversed, and a small surplus is expected for the current year.

#### **Teaching is consistently effective.**

- 14 Teaching and learning are significant strengths. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is good. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons seen, at least good in 65 per cent and very good or excellent in 21 per cent. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching was never poor, but there were a few shortcomings in 6 per cent of lessons, representing one lesson seen in each of French, geography, German, information and communication technology, religious education and science. These relative weaknesses were due to insufficient planning of activities, over-dominant teaching or an inability to manage pupils' behaviour. In these lessons, pupils made slow progress.
- 15 There is much high quality teaching across all subjects by committed teachers who show very good knowledge of their subjects and examination specifications. The consistency of at least satisfactory and, often, better teaching is a major strength because pupils know what is expected of them. They arrive at lessons ready to learn and know that effort and concentration will be insisted upon.
- 16 The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good: basic skills are reinforced appropriately in all years. Teachers stress the importance of accurate spelling, use of specific vocabulary and correct structures in writing and speaking. This is done well for pupils with special educational needs, particularly when they are withdrawn for specific literacy and numeracy support. Students in Years 10 and 11 are engaged in individual research projects which stimulate their interest. For example, a pupil researching the habitat and characteristics of pike demonstrated good presentation skills and accurate recording of findings. When integrated in full lessons, pupils with special educational needs learn well when learning support assistants have had the opportunity to discuss the topic in hand, and when progress is reviewed against pupils' specific targets. Not all subject teachers are able to adapt

class activities to meet the needs of special needs pupils who experience difficulties. The specific training of teachers, and liaison between specialist subject teachers and the special needs department, are developing.

- 17 Teachers make full use of time in lessons and have high expectations of what pupils will achieve. For example, in physical education, Year 8 pupils changed quickly, practised their hockey techniques and rapidly improved their dribbling and ball control. The teacher demonstrated high expectation of progress as he briefed the class about the next lesson. Teachers' expert command of their subject and of examination requirements is a strength in all subjects. For example, in modern foreign languages and mathematics, teachers know in depth the range of topics, concepts and skills assessed in the final examinations. In English, the teacher shared with Year 11 the mark scheme and grade descriptions with pupils, who then applied these expectations of attainment to their homework.
- 18 The planning and sequencing of activities are effective and lead to rapid learning and increased levels of interest. For example, in a Year 10 business studies lesson, the teacher quickly reviewed previous work and provided new information which pupils noted. Pupils were then allowed to investigate through an appropriate range of activities, including the opportunity to use information technology. By the end of the lesson, pupils had acquired good understanding of communications and customer care. This effective planning and sequencing of activities was also demonstrated in Year 10 food technology, in Year 11 history and Year 7 science.
- 19 The quality of ongoing assessment and oral feedback are significant strengths. This is the case across all subjects. Particular good examples include the precise assessment made in music and science, and the helpful and rewarding feedback given to pupils with special educational needs in a Year 7 mathematics lessons on division and number patterns.
- 20 Parents believe that the school sets high expectations for pupils to work hard and that teaching is good. Inspectors confirm the views of parents. Pupils enjoy their learning. They acquire skills and knowledge rapidly, are productive and use lesson time well.

**The provision for pupils' social and moral development is very good.**

- 21 These aspects of the school's provision were identified as strengths during the previous inspection and continue to be very good. Although discrete timetabled time for personal, social and health education is minimal, it is very well focused, and good links with subject areas have been identified. Pupils' social skills are very good; there is ample evidence of the school promoting good relationships and encouraging pupils to show respect towards each other. Adults set very good examples, treating pupils with courtesy but having high expectations of them. The efficient routines of the school and the teaching staff encourage discipline, which is valued by parents and pupils alike. It is not always conducive to allowing pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, particularly in the sixth form, but does ensure academic success. However, there is a strong emphasis on rights and responsibilities in the widest sense. Pupils' very good behaviour around the school and the relative absence of litter testify to the effectiveness of this emphasis. There are examples of disadvantaged pupils being warmly accepted and well integrated into the life of the

school. Examples are the welcome provided to visiting students from a special school and the impressive way in which two pupils with cerebral palsy were fully involved in a rugby session.

- 22 Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. They are helped to distinguish between right and wrong and develop a clear set of values. Adults set a good example, in and out of lessons. Assemblies are used very well to promote social and moral development. For example, a Year 10/11 assembly provided a strong emphasis on the moral responsibility of the individual, and a Year 10 assembly was used effectively to introduce a pastoral care worker and emphasise that bullying is not tolerated in the school. Moral issues are covered well in many subject areas, notably in a religious education lesson on morality and war, and English, where pupils are encouraged to develop skills of argument and persuasion in relation to moral issues such as racism and animal welfare.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Attendance and systems to improve it**

- 23 Attendance is satisfactory. Attendance last year (91.2 per cent) was broadly in line with the national average (90.9 per cent). Attendance three years ago was very good (94.5 per cent) but there has been a steady decline since that time. All unexplained absence is followed up and, therefore, unauthorised absence (0.2 per cent) is well below the national average (1.1 per cent). Tutors monitor attendance daily, with some support from the office, but there are no procedures for readily identifying trends in attendance and analysing the reasons for absence. There is insufficient done to promote good attendance such as:
- rewarding good attendance;
  - publishing tutor group attendance rates;
  - campaigns to discourage term time holidays;
  - systematically identifying and challenging all moderately poor attendance;
  - a written policy;
  - regular review of attendance performance by the governors.

### **Information and communication technology is little used across subjects to support learning**

- 24 Since the previous inspection, the school has made good progress in providing an appropriate course in information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 7 to 11. The lessons give pupils the opportunity to learn how to use computers effectively, and their skills build up over the five years. However, pupils have too little opportunity to reach the higher levels expected in the National Curriculum, which requires them to become discerning users, so that they might choose and design ICT systems to suit particular needs, and to evaluate their work. A Year 11 class was seen learning how to enter data into a spreadsheet, use formulae to calculate means and maximum values, develop procedures for sorting data, and use the software to display graphs. The lesson was suitably targeted at the stage of learning of the class. Although pupils were competent in the basic control of the computer, they were still led through the work, rather than allowed more independence.
- 25 Recent investment, backed up by a substantial commitment of additional time by the ICT co-ordinator, has increased the number of modern computers and provided an

efficient school-wide network. Nevertheless, there are still insufficient computers available to meet national targets. The consequence is that in lessons in other subjects, pupils do not have nearly enough access to computers to support their learning. A further obstacle is that there is very limited access to the Internet. It is not available through the school network, and only a few computers have slow, dial-up access. The school plans to install the fast 'broadband' system, but this has been thwarted by extended external delays. There is only one data projector, so opportunities to engage whole classes in learning through ICT are also restricted.

- 26 Some departments are undergoing training in the use of computers in their teaching programmes through the New Opportunities Fund scheme. This is beginning to have a modest impact, but there remains much to be done to make best use of the technology to broaden the range and scope of pupils' learning.

### **Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory**

- 27 Provision for pupils' spiritual development was identified as a weakness in the previous inspection and there is little evidence to indicate that it has improved significantly. The school does not plan opportunities for spiritual development across curricular areas or encourage teachers to emphasise the value of profound reflection. Very few examples of contributions to pupils' spiritual development were observed. A rare example was a Year 12 English language lesson focused on a presidential speech constructed to help the American people come to terms with the Challenger space shuttle disaster. Students were deeply moved, but retained their critical skills. Although assemblies are positive events and have a strong social and moral dimension, they do not provide an explicit contribution to pupils' spiritual development. There is, however, an improved framework for assemblies since the previous inspection. In general, teachers appear to take pupils' spiritual development for granted, or to equate it too closely with religious education, and so miss the opportunities for inner spiritual growth that arise in everyday life.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

- 28 In order to raise standards even further, the governors, headteacher and teaching staff should:
- (1) Reverse the decline in attendance to restore it to previously high levels. (Paragraph 23)
  - (2) Increase significantly the use of information and communication technology to enhance and support learning in other subjects, as required by the National Curriculum. (Paragraphs 24-26)
  - (3) Provide substantially more opportunities, in assemblies and across the curriculum, for pupils' spiritual development, by giving them time to reflect upon profound issues and experience a personal response. (Paragraphs 27)

### **Sixth form**

- (1) Extend the sixth form curriculum to provide post-16 courses to attract students of average attainment and below. (Paragraphs 40)
- (2) Adopt a wider range of teaching and learning styles to increase opportunities in

lessons for students to investigate, research or be creative. (Paragraphs 38, 63, 73-74, 93)

- (3) Improve the provision of and access to computer equipment and the Internet, to enable students to learn and study independently. (Paragraphs 57, 69, 82)

The governors may wish to address the following issues on their action plan:

- Monitor cost-effectiveness of very small teaching groups.
- Improve evaluation of examination results to compare with expectations for similar students nationally.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	45
	Sixth form	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		71

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 - 11</b>							
Number	2	8	20	9	6	0	0
Percentage	4.5	18	44.5	20	13	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	2	11	20	15	0	0	0
Percentage	4	23	42	31	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

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	630	149
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	21	3

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	109	2

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.6%
National comparative data	8.1%

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2%
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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	67	54	121

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	59	57
	Girls	50	51	51
	Total	95	110	108
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (62)	91 (79)	89 (75)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (25)	74 (54)	60 (38)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	50	45
	Girls	43	46	44
	Total	92	96	89
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	86 (75)	90 (78)	83 (79)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (33)	77 (61)	48 (46)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	71	58	129

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	47	71	72
	Girls	44	58	58
	Total	91	129	129
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	71 (61)	100 (97)	100 (97)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	49 (48)
	National	39.0 (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	13	77%
	National		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
	2001	33	24	57

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	18.8 (22.3)	19.8 (22.3)	19.2 (22.3)	0 (none)	3.4 (2.0)	2.1 (2.0)
National	16.9 (17.7)	17.9 (18.6)	17.4 (18.2)	(2.6)	(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	30	100
	National		N/a

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	777
Any other minority ethnic group	

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	4	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

*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)	51.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.2

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	125

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.9%
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	24.6
Key Stage 4	18.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	2,206,165
Total expenditure	2,227,756
Expenditure per pupil	2,990
Balance brought forward from previous year	14,425
Balance carried forward to next year	-7,166

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years (FTE)	13.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years (FTE)	9.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1

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	779
Number of questionnaires returned	229

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	52	5	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	48	46	4	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	57	4	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	54	15	2	2
The teaching is good.	31	62	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	48	15	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	47	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	37	0	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	28	51	16	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	50	39	4	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	46	7	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	52	12	1	7

*Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.*

## **PART D: THE SIXTH FORM**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and students' achievements**

- 29 Results in the sixth form are good. In 1999 and 2000 they were well above the national average. Although slightly lower, they were still well above average in 2001. With statistically small numbers, comparisons with the national picture at the subject level should be treated with caution; they fluctuate year to year according to the individual students choosing the subject. That said, recent results are high in chemistry and history, and above average in most years in biology, art and design, English, mathematics and physics. No subject is below average. An area for improvement is for the school to use value-added data to evaluate students' actual results against the projections that can be made from prior performance at GCSE. This would help to give a good indicator of students' achievement, in terms of progress made through the sixth form.
- 30 Results in the new AS level examinations taken for the first time in 2001 at the end of Year 12 are good. Nearly all subjects recorded 100 per cent pass rates at grades A-E. Art, English, mathematics and physics results were especially encouraging. The newness of the examination system means there is no foundation of historical data by which to analyse performance.

#### **Students' attitudes, values and personal development**

- 31 Students have excellent attitudes to school. They willingly get involved with sixth form activities such as rag week, the drama group, the band, charity football and hockey matches. They also continue to be involved in the full life of the school by helping to organise events like sports day and the induction of Year 7 pupils, and taking part in activities such as music and drama productions. Students' attitude to study is excellent. They are enthusiastic, keen to excel, and work very hard. They are very interested and highly committed to their subjects. The majority thoroughly enjoy the challenge of more demanding work. They have high aspirations and see their studies as an important ingredient of their future success.
- 32 Students' personal development is very good. They are mature and confident. They work effectively in groups and respect each other's views. The relationships, both between students and with teachers, are excellent, and these have a significant positive effect on learning. For example, students rigorously pursue their questioning with the teacher and with their peers to make sure they fully understand what is taught. There is no embarrassment or fear of making mistakes; the students co-operate willingly and support each other well. They are receptive to new ideas and fresh viewpoints, and are willing to consider views and beliefs different from their own.
- 33 Students are willing to take responsibility. There is a large sixth form committee that is appointed through elections. The committee meets regularly to resolve students' concerns and to organise activities. The sixth form students support the younger pupils by helping in tutor groups and classes. Many students take part in work experience. They show a wider consideration for others through community service, such as work in the local hospital and a residential home for the elderly, and raising funds for charity.

- 34 There is no statistical summary for attendance in the sixth form. Observation during the inspection, and discussion with students and teachers, confirm that attendance is good.

## **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

- 35 Teaching in the sixth form is good. In the forty-eight lessons seen during the inspection, teaching was good in twenty and very good or excellent in thirteen. In other lessons it was satisfactory. There were no unsatisfactory lessons.
- 36 Significant strengths are the high standards of knowledge teachers have of their subjects, their accurate understanding of examination requirements and the high levels of challenge built into lesson activities. These strengths were illustrated across all subjects. For example, in a lesson on algebraic fractions, Year 12 students said that they understood their mathematics very well, thanks to the teacher's thorough and accurate exposition. In modern foreign languages, the linguistic competence of teachers is very good. Activities are explained clearly in the target language, and students respond well to teachers' high expectations. In English, the background notes and a teacher's excellent introductory talk guided students swiftly towards a highly perceptive analysis and debate of Joseph Heller's 'Catch 22'. This was effective because questioning was sharp and probing.
- 37 The assessment and marking of students' work are accurate, detailed and help them to understand their own learning and how to improve further. Day-to-day feedback is very good. Consequently, students learn well and make rapid progress over time. The scrutiny of portfolio and coursework illustrated this well, with written work marked diligently, using precise examination criteria. As a result, work increases in complexity and accuracy. Students commented very positively on their teachers' willingness to discuss work and their progress as often as necessary. Inspectors confirm the positive views of students. Teachers are readily available and prepare students very well for their examinations. In a Year 13 design and technology lesson, for example, the teacher made precise reference to examination specifications and used examples provided by the examination board; students could see how to improve their 2D and 3D prototype forms.
- 38 Although none of the teaching seen was unsatisfactory, teaching styles are, in some cases, restrictive and leave insufficient space for innovation and creativity. When students are not given the opportunity to investigate and research, they do not develop these skills well enough and tend to wait for the teacher to provide the answers. The scrutiny of students' portfolio of work, and a few shortcomings within overall sound lessons, provided evidence of this. In French, there was insufficient opportunity for Year 13 students to work collaboratively and express their own views about a literary text and the author's chosen styles. In pure mathematics, some opportunities were missed to challenge students and let them explore reasons for particular solutions. In English and business studies, the teacher sometimes asked questions, but immediately provided the answers or did not place enough emphasis on students doing their own thinking. This curtailed the opportunity for students to reflect in more depth and deduct for themselves. These relative weaknesses explain why the number of excellent or very good lessons was fairly small. Considering the very good attitudes of students, there is much potential for improving learning further by analysing the effectiveness of the teaching styles. This is a key issue to address.

- 39 Students learn well. They are productive, listen intensively and persevere when faced with demanding problems. They enjoy collaborative and investigative work when given the opportunity. They make substantial gains in knowledge and skills, with efficient use of private study time. Homework is used well to extend learning and develop research and organisational skills.

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

- 40 The sixth form curriculum is good. It offers a suitable range of academic courses at AS and A-level, but there is scope for a broader range of vocational courses. The curriculum meets the aspirations of most students and is broadly responsive to local circumstances. The introduction and successful development of the sixth form have been key elements in the school's continued improvement over the past few years. Students are very positive about the extent to which their individual learning needs are being met. The transition from GCSE to AS and A-level is managed well, and most subjects provide a good induction to advanced level courses via workshops and 'pathway' evenings. Separate courses in key skills have not been popular with students. The emphasis is now on the integration of key skills within all other courses, with a focus on communication this year. There is no current programme to prepare students for accreditation of key skills in numeracy or ICT. Overall, provision for qualifications in key skills is weak. However, this is not a serious issue because most sixth form students already have high GCSE grades in English and mathematics.
- 41 The school takes effective steps to ensure that the curriculum and programmes of work are coherent and allow students to progress well. Where teaching groups are relatively small, such as in music and drama, imaginative opportunities are taken to combine Year 12 and Year 13 classes whenever possible. The emphasis on ensuring breadth across the academic curriculum, particularly as AS courses were introduced, has led to some loss of enrichment activities, particularly the sports and leisure activities on Wednesday afternoons. This is being partly addressed by the compulsory general studies course in Year 13. Ways of increasing further the breadth of provision, within the constraints of limited resources, are being explored, such as the possibility of offering psychology as a distance learning package. There is adequate support for private study and learning outside the school day, although ICT access is limited, and little use is made of the library.
- 42 Further enrichment is provided by the continued emphasis on students' moral and social development. This is fostered partly through the general studies and tutorial system and partly through voluntary charitable fund raising and sporting activity. Recently, sixth form students went to hear former President Clinton's speech on AIDS awareness, and this made a significant impression on them. Students have been active in fund raising for AIDS awareness and cancer research, amongst other worthy causes. The sixth form music group organises concerts for local community groups. A sixth form committee organises social events and trips effectively. Entertainment and sports representatives are elected by fellow students and take their duties seriously. There is no evidence of any planned provision for students' spiritual development or collective worship, but there is adequate coverage of religious education within general studies.

- 43 The personal, social and health education programme in the sixth form is not extensive but does have an appropriate focus on preparing students for higher education and employment. The programme has included an adequate range of visiting speakers, including the admissions tutor from a university. The majority of students have realistic aspirations to go on to higher education and the school caters for them well, but there are limited opportunities for work-related education. Careers education is good; there is good access to a range of relevant information.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

### **Assessment**

- 44 Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. Assessment and marking is accurate and clear so that the students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The diagnosis and provision for individual learning needs is good. There is regular feedback on results, and extra support is given to students as necessary. There is good use of assessment to guide curricular planning. For example, in biology, there is a revision programme planned around errors in completed tests.
- 45 There are very good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress. Tutors know the students well and, together with the head of sixth form, ensure help is available as they need it. Each term, progress is tracked systematically with a computer-generated report given to students and their parents. Tutors meet at least termly with each student to review their progress and set targets. There are invitation evenings scheduled in November of each year to discuss concerns with parents. Teachers are quick to pick up where there are difficulties. Relationships are excellent; students are confident to ask for help.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

- 46 The school provides good educational and personal support and guidance for students in the sixth form.
- 47 There is good information, advice and guidance given to the students to help them choose subjects and settle into the sixth form. The information provided about subjects is clear and helpful, and all the teachers are readily accessible to the Hartismere students. New entrants to the sixth form are given extra support to ensure they are fully informed before they choose their course programme. The "subject evening" for students and parents includes outline presentations and some opportunities for discussion. In consultation with the students, the school plans further improvements to the organisation of the "subject evening". Each student has an interview with a senior member of staff in order to discuss their plans for study and parents are invited to attend. There are follow-up interviews as necessary, and the Head of Sixth is readily available to give advice on GCSE results day. Some students would have liked more detail about the workload and demands of subjects like mathematics.
- 48 Induction arrangements are good. There is a two-day induction programme at the University of East Anglia and very good induction in subjects such as mathematics, history, and business studies. Wherever there are difficulties students are given good individual support to help them settle into the rigour of sixth form study and if necessary there is an opportunity to renegotiate course programmes.

- 49 Careers education and guidance for future study is good. Careers education is included in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme in Year 11, and all students have the option of a one-to-one or group interview with the careers Connexions service. The school plans to further promote the use of the careers advisor during Years 12 and 13. The PSHE programme in the sixth form includes sessions on the university applications process, and discussions with university tutors. A representative from County Hall explains about finance for further education. Students visit universities and attend a careers conference. A number of students have used the “Centigrade” database system to check career options. The careers library is kept up to date, and students make good use of the on-line facilities.
- 50 The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. Attendance and punctuality are discussed at profile reviews three times a year, and the students understand the importance of good attendance. Registers are taken both morning and afternoon. Students need written permission for exeats and sign in and out. Tutors and teachers both monitor attendance closely. All unexplained absence or problems with attendance are quickly followed up. However, there is no statistical summary to support the monitoring of attendance.

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

- 51 Parents and students are very satisfied with what the school provides and achieves. Parents appreciate the very good work done in starting up the new sixth form. They are particularly pleased with the good teaching, high expectations for standards, and the progress made by students. Students are particularly pleased with the way they are helped to settle into the sixth form and the readiness of teachers to help them with difficulties. They are confident that they are taught well, their work is assessed effectively and they are kept well informed about their progress.
- 52 The school works very effectively with parents to keep them involved in their children’s education. They are invited to information evenings and discussions about choice of subjects. They are kept very well informed about progress through profile reports and interim progress checks and, whenever there are problems, the school is quick to involve them. The school has consulted with parents on changes to the reporting system. Some parents have concerns about the style of computer-generated reports.
- 53 The school treats the sixth form students like young adults. It works very effectively to seek their views and address their concerns. The school has a formal consultation process with students. Students elect their own sixth form committee. In addition to organising social and fund-raising activities, the committee raises students’ concerns. The school responds well to students’ suggestions for improvement such as additional careers advice, the organisation of the “subjects evening”, and reviewing the induction procedures for individual subjects.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

### Leadership and management

- 54 Determined and resourceful leadership and management have created and built up a very effective sixth form, now in its sixth year of operation. The headteacher and governors have given appropriate priority to funding this major initiative, mainly by giving additional staff time to teach the good range of courses. That this has taken a somewhat greater share of the school resources than is provided by the LEA's funding formula is fully justified, because the impact has been to raise expectations of the younger pupils and raise standards in the school overall. Managers are aware of the need to re-align the staffing and budget so that appropriate investment can be made elsewhere; for example, in additional equipment and resources.
- 55 A significant strength is that leadership gives clear educational direction. The school's ethos of high achievement, within a framework of good relationships and mutual support, has been extended through the sixth form, with resulting excellent attitudes and commitment of students and high standards. Furthermore, the recently developed tracking system for students' progress, together with the time beyond lessons staff give to students to assist them, show that the school is committed to further improvement. To the school's credit, this has all been achieved at a time when all post-16 work has had to be extensively revised to meet the new course structure that started in September 2000.
- 56 A start has been made on comparing students' examination results in one subject with their achievements in others. This offers one way of evaluating performance, but it is narrow. The governing body and senior managers have not used the data available in school to fully evaluate achievement at the end of the courses. This would entail comparing each student's performance in each subject with the achievements of students with similar starting points nationally. Governors should continue to monitor carefully the cost-effectiveness and the impact on other subjects of the provision of very small teaching groups.

### Resources

- 57 There are sufficient teaching staff and they are well qualified for the subjects they teach. Their professional update training is largely focused on shaping courses to meet the many recent changes in post-16 examination requirements. Not enough attention has been given to enhancing teaching methods to provide a wider range of learning styles and activities in lessons. Accommodation is satisfactory and well maintained. Equipment and materials for use in lessons are usually at least adequate. The stock of books in the library is small for sixth form use. A low number of modern computers and the poor level of access to the Internet further restricts students' access to up-to-date information and learning resources. The main impact is that these resources are insufficient to support the level of independent study and research expected at sixth form level.

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

In the inspection, ten 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 2001.

### GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	10	100		70		8.8	
Chemistry	19	95		47		3.5	
Biology	27	78		33		2.6	
Physics	9	100		78		3.7	
Design & Technology (All versions)	5	100		38		3.4	
Economics	15	93		20		2.7	
Physical Education	11	100		36		2.9	
Art	9	100		89		4.2	
Drama	5	100		0		2.4	
Geography	21	100		48		3.6	
History	17	100		59		3.5	
English	16	100		81		4.4	
English Literature	9	100		56		3.6	
French	3	100		67		4.0	

Source: School prospectus for 2002/2003

### 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
Mathematics	7	86	87	29	43	5.1	5.8
Chemistry	6	100	90	83	43	7.7	5.9
Biology	19	100	88	42	34	5.7	5.3
Physics	6	100	88	33	40	5.7	5.7
Design & Technology (All versions)	9	100	91	44	30	6.4	5.4
Economics	12	75	89	50	36	5.2	5.5
Art & Design	8	100	96	38	46	7.3	6.6
Drama	3	100	99	67	38	8.0	6.6

### GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
Geography	20	95	92	45	38	5.8	5.7
History	13	92	88	54	35	7.0	5.5
English	5	100	92	20	30	5.6	5.3
English Literature	12	92	95	50	37	6.5	5.9
French	2	100	89	50	38	6.0	5.6
German	3	100	91	33	40	4.7	5.8
General Studies	40	80	85	21	23	4.7	4.9

Sources: School results booklet and 2001 Sixth Form PANDA Report

### Intermediate and Advanced vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Advanced Business GNVQ	18	100	n/a	22	n/a	50	n/a
Intermediate Business GNVQ	4	100	n/a	50	n/a	0	n/a
Single Award Business GNVQ	3	100	n/a	33	n/a	33	n/a
Advanced Health & Social Care GNVQ	5	100	n/a	20	n/a	40	n/a

Source: School Prospectus for 2002/2003

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

- 58 The inspection covered the AS level and A-level mathematics courses offered by the school. Students study modules in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Four lessons were observed. Provision for those students re-sitting GCSE mathematics was not inspected.
- 59 The science inspection focused on biology and physics. Observations covered six lessons in biology and two in physics. Two chemistry lessons were observed. Chemistry results have been rising and are well above the national average for the past two years. Students have achieved better results in chemistry than in their other subjects. Of the two chemistry lessons observed, one was satisfactory and one was good. Students make good progress and are enthusiastic about their work. The course is very well organised.

#### Mathematics

Overall, provision in mathematics is good.

#### Strengths

- The standard of work at AS level and A-level is well above average. AS results in 2001 were very good.
- Teachers make very good use of assessment and marking to help students make

progress.

- Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Induction of students onto the Year 12 course is good. Students continue to receive effective support and guidance from their teachers.
- Students have a positive attitude to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Students would benefit from teachers using a wider range of teaching styles, including practical, investigative and graphical calculator work.
- There is insufficient challenge for the most able students.

- 60 The mathematics department does well for its sixth form students. Over recent years, A-level results in mathematics have risen and were outstanding in 2000. In 2001, they dipped to being in line with the national average, but lesson observations and AS results indicate that A-level results should rise again this year. At AS level in 2001, all students gained at least a C grade, and 70 per cent gained a grade A. Over the past four years, there has been very little change in the number of students taking the A-level mathematics examinations. The completion rate is high.
- 61 The standard of work seen in lessons and student's files is well above average. Students have clear, well-structured notes that are well organised and will be of great help to them in revising for examinations. They have a good understanding of mathematics and a secure knowledge of the essential algebraic skills. Year 12 students are developing confidence in working with vectors. They were seen calculating the speed and direction from a Cartesian vector expression for velocity, and the magnitude and direction of the resultant of two or more forces. In Year 13, students successfully apply their knowledge and understanding of differential and integral calculus to problems in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. They are able to integrate complex algebraic expressions, selecting from a range of standard methods.
- 62 Teaching is good overall, and this leads to good learning. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics. They use this to plan effectively for progression, always building on students' prior learning. For example, one teacher extended the students' knowledge and understanding of the manipulation of factors and numerical fractions to the rearrangement of algebraic fractions. The pace of lessons is good, with extensive coverage of material in the time available. Teachers set, and insist upon, high standards of rigour and presentation. They use assessment and marking well to help students make progress. Students have regular end-of-topic tests. They are then given exemplar solutions. The detailed marking of tests and homework contains helpful and challenging comments. Students are also given the summary results for the whole group, which increases challenge and motivation. The induction of students onto the course is good, and teachers continue to give extensive support and guidance.
- 63 Students demonstrate high levels of interest in the subject. They make considered and accurate responses to questions and have an excellent attitude towards the subject. They appreciate the help that they get from their teachers. To cater for the learning styles of all pupils, teachers should consider using a wider range of teaching strategies to include practical, investigative and graphical calculator-based work. Teachers should also ensure that the most able students in the group are fully challenged.

- 64 The mathematics department is well managed. New courses have been introduced effectively, with excellent results. Teachers are aware of examination requirements and focus on maintaining high standards. Teachers plan together and use the allocated curricular time flexibly to ensure that students are fully prepared for modular examinations. The department now needs to consider how they can broaden the mathematics curriculum to meet fully the needs of the most able students of mathematics. The department also needs to consider making suitable provision for the students who have achieved a C grade or above at GCSE and wish to continue their study of mathematics only to support their other studies.

## Biology

Overall, the provision for biology is very good; it has many strengths.

### Strengths

- The teaching is consistent and of a very high quality.
- The teachers' subject knowledge is strong and they communicate enthusiasm for the subject.
- Relationships in lessons are very good. There is a warm, productive, rapport and the students are responsive.
- The biology curriculum is broad, relevant and meets students' needs well.
- The course and lessons are very well planned and efficiently organised.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Some aspects of resources, such as accommodation and information and communication technology, should be improved.
- Refine the assessment system to ensure that all students are making optimum progress.

- 65 A-level biology results show a rising trend. GCE A-level results in 2000 and 2001 were above the national average. For example, in 2001, 42 per cent of students achieved grades A and B compared to 34 per cent nationally, and no student failed to achieve a pass grade. The continuing increase of numbers in biology demonstrates the growing popularity of the subject. The completion rate of the course is good. The current standards of students in Year 12 are above expectation for this stage of the course. They are achieving well in the AS course. Year 12 students can build models that illustrate the fluid mosaic hypothesis of cell membrane structure and explain the different mechanisms of transport through the membrane.
- 66 Virtually all Year 12 students continued with the course into Year 13, and they achieve well. They demonstrate a good understanding of muscle structure and function and can use the sliding filament structure to explain muscle contraction. They are working slightly above the standards expected for Year 13.
- 67 The teaching of biology is very good overall, and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Teachers display good subject knowledge which enables much enthusiasm for the subject to be communicated to the students. Planning is very thorough; it builds well upon the GCSE programme. Lessons are planned in detail and are geared firmly towards improving students' thinking and understanding, rather than just acquisition of facts. Curiosity and a sense of scientific enquiry are fostered well. The teaching is animated and engaging, which sustains a high level of interest in the subject. A lot of collaborative activities are incorporated into the learning, which provides good variety

and stimulation. The use of computers in lessons is increasing, but is not yet enough. Day-to-day marking is thorough with many helpful, detailed comments on how students can improve their work. Students are given good feedback on their progress, and their work is accurately assessed. The teaching and learning are evaluated regularly in order to refine the teaching further. This evaluation could be extended to a longer term analysis of test and exam results in order to identify any potential underachievement.

- 68 Overall, learning is good. Students learn well and are not over-reliant on memorising large quantities of information. For example, Year 13 students can recall work from various parts of the course and, for some students, from their physics course also and synthesise these into a deeper understanding of the working of the eye. They consolidate their learning by using the note-making skills and revision strategies they have been taught. In most lessons, they respond well to challenge, enjoy it, work hard and complete tasks. There is a very positive rapport in lessons, both between the teacher and the students and between the students during the group work. The most talented biologists are challenged effectively and make good progress.
- 69 Leadership in biology is very good. The course is tightly organised and there is good teamwork. There is a strong and distinctive ethos in the department committed to the students' intellectual, personal and social development. The biology curriculum is well managed to achieve this. One laboratory is rather small, which restricts groupings and activities. Information and communication technology resources are limited. Staff have a commitment to evaluating the work of the department and to continuous improvement in the subject. There has been good progress over the past four years.

## Physics

Overall, the provision for physics is satisfactory.

### Strengths

- Staffing is good. The two physics teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about the subject.
- The course is closely aligned to the examination scheme and helps promote examination success.
- Students are responsive to the teaching and positive about the subject.
- There are some good opportunities to take initiative, pursue individual studies and provide challenge for the gifted students.

### Areas for improvement

- More variety of learning activities should be incorporated into many of the lessons.
- The assessment scheme should be used more formally to give students written feedback about their progress and guidance about how to improve further.
- Test and exam marks should be analysed more fully to identify and counter any potential under-achievement.

- 70 A-level results have usually been above the national average but, in 2001, they dipped to close to the average. A third of candidates achieved grades A and B compared to 40 per cent nationally. This was below what the students' GCSE results suggested might have been achieved. The number of candidates was small, but this does not indicate a particularly high drop-out rate. The present increase in numbers in Year 12 suggests a regained popularity of the subject.

- 71 The current standards of students, early in their course in Year 12, are average. They have made a smooth transition from their GCSE studies. Students are achieving much as expected for the AS course. Their investigative skills are developing steadily; students' notes show some good understanding of the motion of projectiles and an ability to use trigonometry to solve related problems. Numeracy skills are generally good, although graphs are often not well presented. Notes are often comprehensive and lucid but lacking polish and sophistication in structure.
- 72 In Year 13, students often achieve well and their attainment is above that expected for the A2 course. For instance, in their work on electricity, they are proficient at manipulating formulae to calculate the energy stored in a capacitor and the discharge time through a resistor. Gifted physicists benefit from the breadth of opportunity open to them, with a wide personal choice of extended investigations and the choice of optional modules open to them.
- 73 The teaching of physics is satisfactory. Teachers display good subject knowledge, which is used well in their explanations and structured approach to teaching key ideas. The teaching of each group is shared between the two teachers to capitalise on their specialisms and enthusiasms. Dedicated teaching of investigations in Year 12, with the teacher's good support for each student, is successful in helping the large class make steady progress with diverse investigations. The examination specification, matched textbooks and published worksheets are used consistently to support the teaching, but this results in a programme of lessons with relatively little variety. Practical work and, very occasionally, video or ICT resources provide some variation to this programme but the teaching pattern in physics lacks much of the variety found in biology and chemistry. This makes the subject less attractive to some potential students. Students are given good oral feedback on their progress, which they appreciate. However there is an over-reliance on this at the expense of more formal written feedback. Marking is less frequent than usual, with relatively few written comments. Students find the self assessment questions set by teachers helpful. There is a lack of firm assessment information at this stage for the students in Year 12.
- 74 Learning is satisfactory. Students develop their knowledge and understanding of important physics ideas at the expected rate. Their progress in developing investigative and practical skills in their extended investigations is steady, rather than fast, limited by the size of the group and the number and diversity of investigations undertaken. Students respond well to challenge and work with good application. On the occasion of the absence of their teacher, Year 13 students demonstrated good independence in their own study. They are positive about their studies, showing interest and curiosity. They have enjoyed the opportunity of attending university physics lectures and valued the chance to take the initiative in their option module studies. Many are hoping to follow careers in science.
- 75 Management of the subject is satisfactory. The staff work well as a team. There is an academic ethos in the department and an aspiration to improve. This is not matched by the systematic procedures necessary to ensure consistent improvement. There is insufficient critical evaluation of the work of the department and the results achieved, including test and exam results. Consequently, the extent of good progress or underachievement is not measured sufficiently; potential underachievement cannot be quickly tackled. Resources are well managed.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

76 The inspection focused on design and technology. Results are above average and the number of students taking the course has increased steadily. Teaching is good.

### Design and Technology

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

#### Strengths

- Standards of work are above average.
- Students' attitudes and commitment to the subject.
- Relationships between staff and students.
- Students have a clear knowledge and understanding of their attainment and progress.

#### Areas for improvement

- Developing opportunities for students to experiment with materials and manufacturing processes during the design stage of their products.
- Extending opportunities for students to use computer-aided designing and manufacturing techniques.
- To put more detail into the planning for each unit of work.

77 The number of students following the A-level course in design and technology over the last three years has increased steadily and the department has achieved a 100 per cent pass rate over this period. The most recent results are above the national average, students achieving slightly higher grades overall than in their other subjects. Half of these students gained A and B grades, compared with 30 per cent nationally. Eight students completed the new AS course and seven have moved on to the A2 year, having achieved a good range of grades from A to D, similar to results in their other subjects.

78 Current students in Years 12 and 13 are making good progress and are achieving standards that are above average in the AS and A2 courses.

79 In Year 12, students complete a good range of mini-projects that extend their working familiarity with a range of materials, including card, metal, textiles and wood. For example, in textiles, they research and investigate the properties of fabrics and ways in which companies develop logos for products, before designing and printing their own logos onto T-shirts. In graphics, they further develop their computer skills, using desktop publishing software to design and manufacture a range of desktop calendars. Currently, these students are learning how to analyse products and demonstrate competent graphic skills to communicate their ideas.

80 In Year 13, students are successfully completing the designing of their final coursework projects. Male and female students are achieving equally well and have produced comprehensive portfolios of their design proposals for a variety of products, well matched to the requirements of the A2 level course. The portfolios demonstrate thorough research, using both primary and secondary sources, and a good understanding of the social impact of their designs. Examples are environmental issues relating to the choice and disposal of materials, and moral issues raised by manufacturing conditions in the Third World. Students have made appropriate use of computers to enhance their work, for example, using the Internet for research, and spreadsheets to record the results of questionnaires. The most talented students

have produced portfolios of an excellent quality, demonstrating a depth of understanding of their chosen products and a high standard of presentation.

- 81 Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of their material specialisms whilst preparing students for the coursework units. They provide detailed help and advice on an individual basis, discussing the work completed and helping students prioritise on how to proceed. For example, in Year 12, a quick graphic task was used effectively to recap how to sketch and render drawings of objects using the crating technique, and students made clear progress within the lesson and achieved a good standard of work. In Year 13, the exemplar coursework materials provided by the examination board are used effectively to familiarise students with the expectations of each course unit. However, students' portfolios for the design unit in Year 13 do not yet demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding of materials, constructions and manufacturing processes drawn from first-hand experience of trialling and experimentation.
- 82 The leadership and management of the course is sound. There is good communication between teachers who are each able to contribute their strengths to the delivery of the course. Teachers have prepared appropriate outline plans and activities for each unit of the course specification, but these plans of work are insufficiently detailed. They do not show, for example, how the full content of each unit is to be delivered or how the work undertaken by a member of staff for one unit will fully support the work of the others. The school improvement plan appropriately prioritises the need to introduce more use of computer-aided design and manufacture and to develop other computer-based resources. However, the plan does not provide details of the proposed activities, such as specific targets and deadlines that will be met.

## **BUSINESS**

- 83 The inspection focused on business studies and economics. Several business courses were seen during the inspection week. Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE), with three, six and twelve-unit programmes, and Intermediate GNVQ and GCSE business studies were sampled. Students' performance in business studies is good. Performance in economics is satisfactory. Teaching in both areas is good.

### **Business Studies**

The provision for business studies is good.

#### **Strengths**

- Teachers have a good command of the subject.
- Lessons and courses are well structured to meet examination requirements.
- The positive attitudes and good behaviour of the students.
- Teachers give very good individual support and feedback on assessed work to students.

#### **Areas for development**

- Review and evaluate students' outcomes at the end of courses.
- Improve development planning to focus on further improving teaching and learning.
- Continue to develop curricular links to industry and commerce.

- 84 The numbers taking Intermediate GNVQ have been small. The completion rate is good. In 2000, all students passed, and those currently studying this course are making good progress and are achieving in line with expectations for the course. Students are able to recall relevant information, and their folders show that they successfully practise the work they have covered in lessons. As part of their coursework, they have undertaken appropriate individual research projects, although the quality of analysis and conclusions is below standard.
- 85 The number taking the six-unit course has also been small, but has increased this year. Students are making good progress to reach standards above national expectations. They are able to understand ideas and then apply them in new areas, as in the lesson on unique selling points which they then applied to a product they had chosen themselves.
- 86 Standards achieved by students taking the twelve-unit award have been above the national average, particularly in relation to the percentage gaining a distinction, which, in 2001 was half of the students. Students are making good progress in their current work; they are reaching standards above national expectation for the course. Their work is sufficiently detailed and gives relevant examples. They analyse a range of information, as in their assignment on the Tolly Cobbold brewery, although the conclusions drawn are sometimes too superficial.
- 87 Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a very good command of the subject, giving clear explanations and relevant examples so that students develop their knowledge and understanding of the units of work. Feedback to students on their assessed work is good. This, together with the review process, means that students know what they need to do to meet their target. The good planning of lessons and courses means that students' completion of work is good, both for the individual units and for the course as a whole. Where teaching is most effective, as in a Year 13 lesson on break-even analysis, a clear introduction was given which focused on the unit specifications. The lesson was well structured, with a well-devised case study to help the students develop the required theoretical concepts and their application. The teacher was enthusiastic and, as well as giving clear explanations, made links to other relevant units of work. Students were given some choice about which tasks they were to tackle and good individual help was given when needed. Where teaching is satisfactory, as in a Year 12 lesson on globalisation, the teacher had clear notes which were explained with a good range of up to date examples. The pattern of discussion was wide-ranging, but not always sufficiently focused. This slowed the pace and showed uncertainty in the teacher's expectations for the outcomes of the lesson.
- 88 Students are committed to working hard and they want to do well. They maintain their concentration throughout lessons and are well behaved and co-operative. Relationships between students and teachers are good; this enables students to ask for help whenever they need it. However, many of them do not volunteer answers or take part actively in discussions. The assignments to meet the coursework requirements are completed well and give opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own work and to undertake some research at first hand.
- 89 Business studies and economics form a single department. It is well managed and led, with the head of department having a clear view of what is needed for future developments. The team is relatively new but committed to working together, sharing ideas and good practice. The head of department does some monitoring of teaching and standards through verification of students' work. This needs to be developed

further, together with a more specific development plan, and focused on teaching and learning issues. There are some effective links with local industry and commerce, particularly in business studies, but these need further development. Students need access to a wider range of current information to support independent research and learning.

## Economics

Provision in economics is satisfactory. The school offers AS in Year 12 and A2 in Year 13.

### Strengths

- Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Lessons and courses are well structured in relation to the examination specifications.
- Students have very positive attitudes and behaviour.
- Very good individual help is given to students.

### Areas for development

- The range of teaching and learning experiences needs to be expanded, particularly those which encourage independent research and learning.
- Further develop the review of students' progress during the course and review and evaluate students' outcomes at the end of the course.
- Develop industrial links further to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

90 Standards reached in economics are in line with national expectations. The numbers taking economics has been relatively small for statistical comparison, but a greater-than-average number of students has gained the higher grades over the past three years. The rate of completion for the course is good. Students currently following the course are making satisfactory progress. They are making good progress in knowledge and understanding for the units being studied and use this to explain changes, such as the possible impact of the introduction of a minimum wage. They analyse a range of situations, particularly in relation to exemplar case studies. Less well developed is students' ability to initiate research, draw conclusions, comment on the relevance of theoretical models and, as a result, make recommendations. There are good examples of key skills being developed, such as presentation as part of communication but, due to a change in policy for the sixth form, these are not systematically signposted or recorded.

91 Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and of the examination requirements. This leads to a well-planned course and individual lessons which are clearly related to the specifications. It enables students to develop detailed knowledge of the units followed and they can use subject vocabulary accurately and apply this to specific case studies or questions. When teaching is good, as in a Year 12 lesson on labour markets, there is a review of the previous lesson to check students' understanding and then clear tasks are set to apply this work in new situations. The teacher gave clear explanations and set timed tasks which kept the students focused on their work. Questioning and individual help was used effectively, when needed, so that students felt able to check their understanding.

92 Where teaching is satisfactory, as in a Year 12 lesson on demand and supply theory, the teacher, through questioning and well organised notes, developed a good level of understanding and analysis. However, for most of the lesson, few students participated actively and many were not asked questions directly. They did not

volunteer or build on each other's answers. The teacher had a good understanding of the subject and gave many good examples, although this did not always help the students to focus on the central ideas being developed.

- 93 Students show a high level of concentration and remain focused on their work throughout the lesson. Their folders are well ordered and show comprehensive notes, with a good range of information, although the teacher provides much of this. They are well behaved and co-operative. Relationships are such that the students ask for, and get, help whenever it is needed. The concentration on examination requirements gives students well-developed skills for tackling examinations. The low level of contact with industry leads to fewer opportunities than usual for students to take the initiative in research and learning. Many of the students are passive during lessons, although they answer questions if they are asked directly.
- 94 Economics and business studies form a single department. It is well managed and led, with the head of department having a clear view of what is needed for future developments. The team is relatively new but committed to working together, sharing ideas and good practice. The head of department does some monitoring of teaching and work through verification and of students' work. This needs to be developed further, together with a more focused development plan so that, together, these are focused on teaching and learning issues. Links with local industry and commerce need further development, and students need access to a wider range of current information to support independent research and learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The school does not offer sixth form courses in this area.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

The school offers AS and A2 courses in physical education. The courses were not inspected. AS results are reasonable. No students have reached the end of the A2 course yet.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

The course was not inspected. Five students completed the advanced GNVQ in 2001 and all were successful.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

The school offers advanced courses in art and drama. They were not inspected. AS level results for Year 12 students in 2001 were very good in art, but below the school's average in drama. Full A-level results were good in both subjects.

## HUMANITIES

95 In this category the school provides courses in history and geography. History results are above average and are a strength of the school. The inspection focused on geography. AS result in geography achieved by Year 12 students were good in 2001. Full A-level results were at the national average. They have improved in recent years; in 2001, students did at least as well in geography as in their other subjects. There are courses leading to examination at AS and A-level. The number of pupils who choose geography is increasing. There are currently 32 pupils studying the subject in the sixth form.

### Geography

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

#### Strengths

- Standards of attainment are a little above average.
- Teaching is very effective.
- Courses are well planned and challenging.
- There is an excellent level of commitment by students.

#### Areas for improvement

- Continued development of key learning skills, including ICT.

96 Attainment at AS and A-level is improving, with more students gaining higher grades in the examinations. For example, in the 2001 A-levels, all but one student passed, and almost half gained the highest grades A and B. Girls did better than boys. A third of the girls gained grade A, but none of the boys did. Students achieve well, doing at least as well as in other subjects and, in some cases, a little better. There is a good match between their performance at GCSE and in the sixth form. The completion rate is good.

97 The standard of work seen in students' folders and in lessons is above average. Students have a sound knowledge of terminology, and are beginning to develop a good understanding of the principles of both physical and human geography. For example, Year 12 students describe confidently the processes which cause earthquakes, and Year 13 students explain the formation of glacial landscapes. Work in Year 13 gives them a good understanding of the challenges which face people in countries at different levels of development. They interpret statistical data, for example in their work on rivers, and communicate ideas well, both in diagrams and in writing. Year 13 students evaluate theories, for example of coastal management in the United Kingdom and economic development in Nigeria.

98 The quality of teaching is very good. A team of subject specialists work together well to provide the course and to plan lessons that are interesting and challenging. Pupils benefit from this subject expertise. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, the teacher gave an informative introduction to the factors affecting settlement location. She then set a worthwhile practical activity. The students worked together well in pairs, analysing maps and aerial photographs, and consequently gained a good understanding of places in different parts of the UK. Similarly, in a Year 13 lesson, the teacher used his knowledge effectively to explain a model of economic development and used Brazil as an example. He then challenged the students to apply the model to Nigeria. Students gained a lot from this lesson. Their commitment and effort was excellent. They learned about the growth of the Nigerian oil industry and gained a

good understanding of recent changes in the country. They showed skill in interpreting a range of resources and theories, and in presenting their own ideas to the rest of the class.

- 99 Students' attitudes are excellent; they therefore gain a lot from their lessons. They are attentive and co-operative. They take part confidently in group activities and value each other's contributions and questions. They evaluate information provided very carefully and patiently. This was evident in a Year 13 lesson, where the teacher provided a good selection of materials, including newspaper articles and government reports. Students worked with determination and concentration to read and analyse this information. They were then able to make a positive contribution to the subsequent class discussion. As a result, they gained a good understanding of environmental changes in south east England.
- 100 Work in geography is led and managed effectively, and students are well prepared for their examinations. The syllabus has been chosen carefully, so students build on their success at GCSE. Teachers know their students well and provide good individual support for their learning.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

- 101 The school provides advanced courses in English language, English literature, French and German. All were inspected. Performance in both English courses is very good. Very small numbers of students study French and/or German. Performance is above average, reflecting the high prior attainment of the students taking these subjects.

### **English**

Overall, the quality of provision is good.

#### **Strengths**

- Results in AS and A-level courses have been consistently high.
- Teachers and students have a strong, shared commitment to success.
- Students enjoy their English studies and are keen to learn.
- Teaching is good and consistently effective in developing students' confidence and understanding.
- Very good use is made of assessment data to set high expectations and monitor students' progress.
- The subject is led and managed very well.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- In a minority of lessons, insufficient emphasis is given to developing students' independent learning skills.
- Teachers do not always use questioning effectively in order to check understanding and, in particular, ensure that all students are fully involved and contributing to lessons.

- 102 Standards achieved in GCE AS and A-level are above average and improving in both English language (now English language and literature) and English literature. Standards have continued to improve since the previous inspection. There are particular strengths in English literature, but English language and literature is developing well, considering that teachers need to acquire the necessary expertise to

cover the language element. Students make good progress from their GCSE courses and a good proportion achieve higher grades at A-level. Course completion rates are good.

- 103 Achievement in lessons is above average and sometimes well above average. Students deal confidently with a range of complex texts and demonstrate the ability to make perceptive comparisons. Students demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of texts studied and a genuine enjoyment of textual study. Many students show a fluent and authoritative command of language and are very interested in exploring how texts achieve effects. Most students are developing extensive critical vocabularies which they use to good effect in class discussions and formal written essays. Many students are quick to identify the key features of a text and do not retreat from engaging with ambiguities and areas of potential confusion. They have very good skills in notemaking and annotation.
- 104 Higher-attaining students organise their material very well and build effectively on the comprehensive and well-judged guidance provided by teachers. They generally have a fluent discursive written style and approach complex tasks with confidence. For example, one student made an assured analysis of multiple narrative techniques in 'Captain Corelli's Mandolin'. These students show considerable skill in comparing texts, as shown by one student's writing that compares poems by Shakespeare, Auden and Carol Ann Duffy to good effect. Middle-attaining students show developing strengths in textual analysis and critical style and apply a framework for evaluating aspects of language to a range of texts, such as recipes, diary writing and the language of broadcasting. Relatively lower-attaining students benefit particularly from teachers' guidance material and generally make good progress. These students' essays are often too general and they find it difficult to develop their own critical voice. However, they cope well with many elements of the course, for example, by showing understanding of the cultural and historical context of literature such as 'Dr Faustus'.
- 105 Teaching is good overall and no lessons were less than satisfactory. Students benefit from this consistency. Teachers have a high level of subject knowledge, particularly in relation to the texts studied and the examination requirements. Where subject knowledge is less strong, notably some elements of language study, teachers work hard to acquire the necessary information. Planning and preparation of lessons are good, using high quality guidance materials. Teachers have high expectations of students and make very effective use of assessment data to monitor progress. Most teachers have an evident enthusiasm for the subject which is effectively communicated to students. At its best, teaching and learning in English can be excellent. A Year 13 lesson on Joseph Heller's 'Catch-22' achieved an exceptionally effective balance between direct teaching, encouraging students to share their own insights and channelling students' enthusiasm towards productive critical activity.
- 106 Students consistently enjoy their English studies and engage well with texts studied and tasks set. They value the commitment and expertise of their teachers highly. Most students work very productively at a good pace and higher attainers, in particular, contribute well to class discussions and in response to questions.
- 107 Although teaching and learning observed was never less than satisfactory, there are a few occasions when relative weaknesses in planning and organisation limit the progress that can be made. There are some missed opportunities to develop students'

independent learning skills and some lessons in which questions are not targeted effectively, with the result that less-confident and less-motivated students can easily avoid active involvement.

- 108 Leadership and management of English is very good. There is a high level of commitment to securing continued improvements in the quality of provision. A strong team approach has been nurtured and there is a shared commitment to success. The difficult balance between ensuring consistency and encouraging individuals to develop their own areas of interest and expertise is managed very well. The head of department's strong commitment to using assessment data effectively in order to set and maintain high expectations and good student progress is now shared by all staff. There is very effective joint planning of the curriculum in order to ensure that students make the transition from GCSE to A-level successfully and that examination requirements are covered rigorously and enjoyably.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

### French

Overall, the quality of provision in French is satisfactory.

#### Strengths

- Teachers have a very good command of the subject and examination requirements.
- Standards at A-level are above average.
- The day-to-day assessment and feedback to students is good.
- Students demonstrate high levels of commitment and perseverance.

#### Areas for improvement

- Teaching strategies to improve speaking skills in Year 12.
- Students' awareness of topical issues and their general knowledge in Year 12.
- Opportunities in lessons for investigation and collaborative working.

- 109 Low numbers of students opt to study French at A-level. Those who do, enter the course with high results at GCSE. They maintain their standards and obtain above-average results at A-level. In 2001, two of the three students achieved a pass, with one obtaining a high grade. The AS results in 2001 were good, with all three students achieving A-C grades.
- 110 The two students now in Year 13 are working at above-average standards. They speak French confidently and convey their views and opinions very effectively. Pronunciation and intonation are good. They have high levels of general knowledge and use a wide range of sophisticated grammatical structures and vocabulary. This was demonstrated very well when they engaged in discussions about racism. The quality of written work is also good. Essays are structured appropriately and ideas are argued well. In contrast, students' speaking skills in Year 12 are under-developed. Students lack confidence and do not always have the necessary general knowledge of social, moral and political issues to sustain a conversation, to challenge teachers or their peers and debate key contemporary matters. The quality of written work is satisfactory overall, although basic grammatical mistakes remain. Comprehension skills, however, are very good. All five students understand French

spoken at normal speed and can extract information from a wide range of sources, including difficult cassette materials, such as the recording used to present the differences in the ways of thinking of men and women.

- 111 Sixth form teaching is sound overall. The strengths are the high level of command teachers have of the subject, the consistent use of French to lead the lesson, the excellent knowledge of examination requirements and the high expectations teachers have of Year 13 students. The success of the teaching is demonstrated particularly well in the detailed marking and assessment of students' written work, with constant emphasis on learning from past mistakes. Evidence of impact is shown as students make good progress from Year 12 to Year 13. Shortcomings are in the insufficient time given to Year 12 students to reflect on what to say and how to say it and the limited strategies used to ensure that all students contribute orally in Year 12, for example through collaborative planning of ideas. The work of the foreign language assistant is excellent. Not only does he bring to the group a wealth of relevant and up-to-date information about France, but he is also very skilful at putting this knowledge across, for example when explaining the meaning of new words. He makes a very good contribution to the linguistic and cultural development of students and teachers.
- 112 Students work very hard, are attentive and show interest in the subject. All want to do well and use a range of sources effectively, for example researching information from the Internet, or using grammar references and dictionaries. Year 13 students seek help when necessary and ask questions when they do not understand. Whilst they are very keen and hardworking, Year 12 students tend to be more passive. They have not yet acquired sufficient strategies to challenge and argue a point. However, they organise their coursework effectively, work hard during private study time and arrive well prepared for the lessons. They have the opportunity to go on work experience to France in February and appear to be very excited by this venture.
- 113 Since the previous inspection, steady progress has been maintained in Year 12 and standards have improved from being in line with the average to above average at the end of Year 13. However, the number of students remains very low and few continued from AS to A2. Leadership and management of post-16 provision is sound. The sharing of classes is managed well, with teachers liaising regularly to maintain progression on the course. Policies and procedures are applied consistently, for example the sharing of assessment criteria with students. Teachers have kept up to date with national changes to examinations, but professional development on teaching and learning methodology post-16 has been limited. Other positive features of the sixth form are the opportunity for students to work with younger pupils, and their participation in the school's European week.

## German

The quality of provision in German is satisfactory. There are no students in the current Year 13.

### Strengths

- Students make good progress from GCSE and are already able to debate topical issues only one term into the AS course.
- Students have a well-developed understanding of grammar and syntax.
- Teachers' expectations are high, particularly in the accuracy of students' written work and the quality of pronunciation.
- Day-to-day assessment and feedback in lessons are very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- The ability of students to speak with more confidence, particularly when challenging others' viewpoints.
- Students' self-assessment of their written work to avoid basic inaccuracies in their coursework.

- 114 Low numbers of students opt to study German. They enter the course with high results at GCSE. They maintain their standards and obtain results that are above average at A-level. In 2001, the three A-level students and the four AS students all achieved a pass, including three at the higher grades A and B.
- 115 Five students follow the AS course in the current Year 12. They speak German fluently, but do not always have the necessary language or confidence to challenge others' views and opinions in depth. Pronunciation and intonation are good. Students have high levels of general knowledge and, after only one term on the course, demonstrate an ability to write about serious concerns relevant to young adults, such as 'rights and responsibility', 'health matters' and 'family relationships'. Essays include good arguments and are of appropriate length, but basic spelling or grammatical errors remain. Comprehension skills are very good. All five students understand the range of styles and idioms used to address different audiences, as shown in a project on the media, newspapers and the "gutter press".
- 116 Sixth form teaching is sound overall, with some very good features. Particular strengths are the teachers' precision in presenting grammar points, such as the lesson on demonstratives, and the teachers' clarity of diction. An aspect to improve is to ensure the involvement of all students in speaking, even when the lesson is solely focused on grammar. This is particularly relevant for students who start the course with slightly lower prior knowledge. Teachers have high levels of language competence and know all examination requirements. Marking is thorough and helps students improve. More should be done to encourage them to self-assess their work. The German assistant was not present during the inspection week, but students say that they have regular opportunities to practise the language orally.
- 117 Students work very hard, listen intently and show interest in the subject. They take part readily in oral work and volunteer detailed responses. The students who study both French and German said that they are more confident in German because they were taught in a small group in Year 11 and feel better equipped to tackle the AS course. Coursework is up to date, and private study time contributes effectively to improving standards further.
- 118 Students look forward to going on work experience to Germany and are enthusiastic about this opportunity to travel, use the language and learn about German culture and traditions.
- 119 In the languages department, there is much good teamwork, with effective sharing of resources. Leadership and management of post-16 provision is sound. The sharing of classes is managed well, with teachers liaising regularly to maintain progression on the course. Policies and procedures are applied consistently, for example the sharing of assessment criteria with students. Teachers have kept up to date with

national changes to examinations, but professional development on teaching and learning methodology post-16 has been limited. Other positive features of the sixth form are the opportunity for students to work with younger pupils and their participation in the school's European week.