

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **DANE COURT GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

Broadstairs

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118932

Headteacher: Mr R H Curtis

Reporting inspector: Akram Khan OBE  
27296

Dates of inspection: 5 - 8 March 2002

Inspection number: 193013  
Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (Selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Virginia Austin
Date of previous inspection:	27 January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
27296	Akram Khan OBE	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9030	Robert Love	Lay inspector		<p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
10905	Dr Alan Brewerton	Team inspector	Mathematics	Sixth form coordinator
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Religious Studies	<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</p>
8501	Paul Hartwright	Team Inspector	<p>Design and technology</p> <p>Information and communication technology</p> <p>Physics</p>	
13067	Alan Quinn	Team inspector	<p>Biology</p> <p>Chemistry</p>	
1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	History	<p>Special educational needs</p> <p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?</p>
19404	Les Schubeler	Team inspector	French	How well are students taught?
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education	
20262	Susan Summers	Team inspector	English	

10666	Patricia Wheeler	Team inspector	Sociology Business education	
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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Dane Court Grammar is a large, selective grammar school, for boys and girls aged 11 to 18. There are 1148 pupils on roll, of whom 276 are in the sixth form. It draws most of its pupils from 40 primary feeders, from across the Isle of Thanet, which is known to have a high level of economic and sociological disadvantage. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school at the beginning of Year 7 is well above the national average, though it is below Kent Local Education Authority (LEA)'s average for grammar schools and well below the average for grammar schools nationally. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, at 3.3 per cent, is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language, at 2.1 per cent, is in line with the average for most schools. There are 6.4 per cent of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs (SEN), which is well below the national average. Currently seven pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The pupils with the highest level of need have emotional and behavioural problems, visual and physical impairment or are autistic. This was a short inspection, which included an in-depth evaluation of the sixth form.

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

Dane Court Grammar is a very good school with outstanding features. It is very successful in enabling its pupils to reach high standards of work. Teaching is good in Years 7- 11. Standards are high and have improved significantly since the last inspection. The highly effective leadership of the headteacher provides staff and pupils with clarity of purpose, which unifies all in the pursuit of high standards. The development of well-rounded individuals is given the highest priority. There is an ethos of mutual trust and respect. Teachers encourage pupils to develop very positive attitudes to their learning, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Overall, the school provides very good value for money.

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

- Pupils reach very good standards of work and achieve very high results in national tests and public examinations. The examination results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) place the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally.
- Outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the governing body enables staff to make a very good contribution to the school's work.
- The consistently good teaching contributes strongly to effective learning and high standards.
- The school provides a broad range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities; the educational provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- There is a high standard of care for pupils. The very good ethos of the school results in a harmonious community where mutual respect and mature attitudes are fostered very successfully.
- Parents' views of the school are very positive and parental support for the school is very good.

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

- There is a need to improve provision for personal and social education in Years 8 and 9.
- Departmental priorities for improvement.

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

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

The school has maintained the many strengths identified in the January 1997 report and improvement since then has been very good. Most key issues arising from the report have been tackled effectively. There is a clear focus on raising the standards of attainment of all pupils based on improved systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress. Well-planned and focussed staff development has succeeded in raising the quality of teaching and learning. Results in the GCSE and Advanced and Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level examinations have improved significantly at rates well above those found nationally. Development planning has improved considerably at all levels, though it still requires precision and clearly agreed priorities. Pupils' ICT skills have improved significantly, reflecting improved access to modern computers and the much enhanced staff expertise, but not all key elements of ICT are taught and assessed in Years 10 and 11. The legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all the pupils and students still is not met fully. The school's capacity to improve is very

good, given the strong commitment to maintaining high standards by all in positions of responsibility and the very active involvement of governors.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and 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*	C
A-levels/AS-levels	A*	A	A*	

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average   E

*A\* indicates the results are in the top five percent of schools nationally. The range of attainment on entry is much broader at this school than in grammar schools nationally.*

In 2001, results in English, mathematics and science in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were very high in comparison with the national average. In comparison with grammar schools pupils' performance was in line with the average in English and science but well below in mathematics. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. In 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes both at the higher grades A\*-C and A\*-G in the GCSE examinations was very high in comparison with the national average. In line with the national trends, the girls did particularly well in 2001 and outperformed boys. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE/GNVQ A\*-C and the average total GCSE point score per pupil are in line with similar grammar schools. Overall, pupils' performance was better than other selective schools in drama, geography and history; below average in French, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics and sports studies and in line with the average in all other subjects. The school exceeded the targets it set itself for the year 2001. Evidence suggests that the school should achieve realistic targets it has set for 2002.

There has been significant improvement in all aspects of students' performance in A-level results. The average A/AS point score of students entered for two or more GCE A-levels has improved substantially from 18.5 in 1997 to 26.9 in 2001. In 2000 and 2001, the average A/AS point score of candidates entered for two or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent was well above the national average. In 2001, in comparison with the national average, students achieved high standards in biology, physics, French and religious studies; well above average in media studies, English literature, general studies, geography and sociology; above average in art and design, chemistry, computer studies, economics, design and technology, German and history and average in mathematics and sports science.

Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' achievement is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' achievement is very good in English, mathematics, science and religious studies; good in modern foreign languages, geography and history and satisfactory in ICT. The gifted and talented pupils are reaching high standards in most subjects. Pupils on the register of special needs make good progress because they are all well known to their teachers and receive appropriate individual help in most lessons. Most pupils with English as an additional language are fluent in English and they achieve as well as their peers.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school and work are very good. Motivation is high and it contributes to very good learning.
Behaviour, in and out of	Pupils' behaviour is very good. They conduct themselves very

classrooms	responsibly in and out of classes. The atmosphere in the school is friendly and hardworking.
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Personal development and relationships	Pupils are mature, show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning. They are given a good range of opportunities to take responsibility within the school. Relationships are very good at all levels.
Attendance	Attendance is well above the national average and supports pupils' progress. Unauthorised absence is very low. Punctuality is very good.

Pupils are very positive about what the school offers them. They participate in the life of the school and willingly accept opportunities for responsibility. When given the opportunity, they adapt easily to a more independent learning environment.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall. Effective planning, high expectations and teachers' very good subject knowledge ensure very good responses from pupils, who make correspondingly good progress. In English, mathematics and science rigorous and demanding teaching promotes critical thought and very good attainment. In modern languages, art and design, music, geography and physical education, teachers adopt varied and interesting methods to encourage thinking and consolidate pupils' understanding. In Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, close attention to the public examination requirements concentrates both teachers' and pupils' minds in a very positive way. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very good across the school. Information and communication skills in most subjects enhance pupils' learning. Planning for pupils with SEN is good; they are well supported by teachers and they learn effectively in all subjects. English, mathematics, science, art and design, music and modern foreign languages plan enrichment and extension work to challenge gifted and talented pupils and these pupils also benefit from a wide range of out of school learning opportunities. In a small number of lessons teaching, though satisfactory, does not promote the depth and richness of learning of which most pupils are capable. In the sixth form, teaching is very good and enables students to develop good independent learning habits, including research skills.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good: All pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum except for personal and social education in Years 8 and 9 and ICT in Year 8. A very good range of A and AS subjects is provided in the sixth form. Courses are very well matched to students' aspirations.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The quality of support is very good. Targets in individual educational plans are appropriate and assessment is systematic.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Most pupils for whom English is an additional language enter the school with a good command of English. They benefit from subject teachers' careful attention to the development of their literacy skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral and social development. Its provision for cultural development is good and that for spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares	The school provides a very safe environment and the quality of pastoral

for its pupils	support is very good. The school has good systems for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development.
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The curriculum is successful in enabling all pupils to achieve high standards. English, mathematics, science, music and modern foreign languages plan enrichment and extension work to challenging gifted and talented pupils. More demands could be made of very high attaining pupils in other subjects. A wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities provides very good opportunities for pupils to broaden their education.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher, the senior management team and governors provide highly effective leadership. The leadership of the sixth form is very effective and provision is managed very efficiently. Most middle managers provide good leadership of their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their role very well; they are involved in strategic policy development and in monitoring and supporting effectively the departments assigned to them. Statutory requirements in respect of collective worship are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The senior and middle managers, governors and LEA officers monitor and evaluate systematically the performance of the school. The information is used effectively to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Efficient use is made of the school's existing resources. Valuable support is provided by non-teaching staff.

There is a shared commitment to raising standards and providing high quality education. The senior management team and the school's governors have a good grasp of its strengths and weaknesses and have the required capacity to make further improvements. The school's financial management and the way it approaches 'best value' are very good.

## 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>Pupils enjoy coming to school. The school helps their children to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>The behaviour of pupils is good in school.</li> <li>Teaching is good. Expectations are high and children make good progress. Parents are well informed about their children's progress.</li> <li>The school is well led and managed. Parents find it easy to approach with problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The pupils being given the right amount of homework.</li> <li>Closer partnership with the school.</li> </ul>

Parents are generally very pleased with the school and the quality of education it provides. The inspection team agrees with parents' perception of the school's effectiveness and particularly supports their views about the ethos of the school, which is a major factor in ensuring that pupils achieve well. Inspectors have no real concerns about homework, although the tasks set in some subjects could be more challenging, especially for high attaining pupils. Some parents responding to the questionnaire would welcome a closer partnership between themselves and the school. Arrangements for consultation with parents are generally good. The school maintains a full system of parents' evenings to discuss pupils' progress, subject options, to introduce sixth form courses and to discuss university applications. The headteacher and the governing body are keen to strengthen further relationships with parents.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this large 11-18 mixed grammar school has 276 students and is expanding. The numbers of boys and girls are similar. Over eighty per cent of students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form and about 20 students join them from other schools. A small proportion of students transfers to another college where vocational courses are available. The GCSE examination results are well above the national average so virtually all students embark on two-year courses leading to four AS-levels in Year 12 followed by general studies A-level and, at least, three other A-levels in Year 13.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is successful and is, overall, very cost effective. Students learn effectively and achieve very good results. The sixth form caters well for its students through a wide range of academic courses, leading to GCE Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced levels, and provides a rich environment for personal development. The school does not offer any vocational courses. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. Results in 2001 for AS-level and A-level were very high compared with national averages. Leadership and management are very good and the school provides very good value for money.

### Strengths

- AS-level and A-level examination results, particularly those of biology, physics, religious education, media studies, English literature, French, general studies, geography and sociology.
- The curriculum is very good.
- Teaching and learning.
- Students' very positive attitudes to learning.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form.

### What could be improved

- Examination results in mathematics and sports studies.
- Accommodation and learning resources in some subjects.
- Provision for information and communication technology.

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

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Biology	<b>Very good.</b> Examinations results have been consistently high. Teaching is very good. The department is very well managed.
Business Education	<b>Good.</b> Examination results were above average in 2001. Teaching is good, which has resulted in students developing very good investigative skills.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Examination results in 2001 showed a marked improvement on the results achieved in 2000. Teaching and learning are good.
Design technology	<b>Good.</b> Examination results in 2001 were above average. Teaching and management are good leading to good achievement.
English	<b>Very good.</b> Examination results are well above average. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which leads to very good teaching and learning.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
French	<b>Very good.</b> Examination results were very good in 2001. Very good teaching and learning, coupled with a strong focus on the needs of students, have a very positive impact upon standards.
History	<b>Good.</b> Examination results in 2001 were above average. Teaching is good. Students are well prepared, particularly in the planning and techniques of essay writing.
Computing Studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> A-level examination results in 2001 were above average but AS-level results were below. Subject knowledge and, teaching, overall, are good.
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Staff have good subject knowledge and teaching is good. Although A-level results in 2001 were below those of similar schools, AS-level results show evidence of improvement.
Physics	<b>Very good.</b> A-level results in 2001 were very high although AS-level results were slightly below average. Teaching is very good and at times excellent.
Sports Education	<b>Outstanding.</b> While A-level results in 2001 were average, AS-level results were well above average and there are indications of a significant improvement for 2002. Courses are very well organised and teaching is excellent.
Sociology	<b>Very good.</b> Examination results in 2001 were well above average, reflecting the very good teaching which leads to very good learning.
Religious Studies	<b>Very good.</b> Students achieve high standards in AS-level and A-level examinations. Analytical and evaluation skills are very well developed. The quality of teaching, leadership and management are very good.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good quality support and guidance is provided in Years 12 and 13. Information about sixth form courses is very good and students are well prepared for the requirements for AS-level and A-level courses. Students are well informed about other opportunities beyond school but a few students express doubts about non-academic advice. Their progress is well monitored and they are provided with very good support.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management in the sixth form are very good. Development planning is very good. Students' performance is monitored thoroughly and appropriate steps are taken to identify and overcome weaknesses. The governors play a very effective role in leadership in the sixth form.

## 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 in most subjects.</li> <li>• Teachers provide help and support when it is needed.</li> <li>• The range of courses allows students to follow courses which are well matched to their talents and career aspirations.</li> <li>• The information about courses is clear and helpful.</li> <li>• Students feel that they are encouraged to work hard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some students feel that they are given insufficient advice about careers.</li> <li>• They feel that they are not treated as adults.</li> <li>• Some pupils feel that the school does not provide a good range of activities and enrichment courses.</li> <li>• Some students feel that they cannot rely on the school if they have personal problems.</li> </ul>

Discussion between inspectors and a significant number of students, both formally and informally, indicates that students are very positive about the sixth form, the range of subjects offered and the support they receive. The strengths identified are justified but, overall, the concerns expressed are not. Although the teaching programme and the demands of examinations mean that free time during the school day is limited, there are many extra-curricular activities, which take place outside of normal school hours, in which students could become involved. In Year 12 there is some direction in ensuring that students make the most of very limited free time by studying under the watchful eye of a teacher. Relationships with teachers are based upon mutual respect and students in the sixth form are provided with many privileges. The sixth form committee provides a forum for debate with teachers and senior managers of the school who listen carefully to the views of students. Overall, the progress of students is well monitored by their teachers, courses are well matched to students' aptitudes and aspirations and they are provided with good advice on the opportunities available to them in the fields of higher education and employment. Inspectors agree, however, that the advice and information provided for students intending to take up employment on leaving school could be improved. Students have regular opportunities to discuss progress with tutors, who also make considerable efforts to provide help and support for those who may have personal problems.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**Pupils reach very good standards of work and achieve very high results in national tests and public examinations. The examination results in the GCSE place the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally.**

1. Attainment on entry is well above average but below the average for Kent grammar schools and well below the average for selective schools nationally. This is confirmed at the end of Year 6 by the standardised reading, cognitive ability and National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science. Standards on entry are reasonably stable although, as measured by tests taken in Year 7, they are higher in the current Years 7 and 8 than in other years. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is average. The percentage, 6.4 per cent, of pupils on the register of special educational needs is well below the national average. Of these, seven pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Given the attainment on entry to the school, all pupils make good progress throughout the school and their achievements are good.
2. In 2001, the school's National Curriculum test results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9, were very high compared with results nationally. The high results have been maintained over a number of years and the rate of improvement has been above the national trend in recent years. The results in national tests for 14 year olds are very high compared with results nationally and consistently place the school in the top five per cent nationally. In comparison with grammar schools nationally, the school's results are below average. Results in English and science are in line with the average for grammar schools; those for mathematics are well below the average. However, given the wider ability intake at Dane Court in comparison with other grammar schools, this still represents good achievement. The gap between boys and girls is narrower than it is nationally in National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds. In fact there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in English but in 2001, boys performed better than girls in science and mathematics. Moreover in the National Curriculum tests, in 2000, boys performed better than girls in English, mathematics and science. The school's analysis indicates that pupils with English as an additional language perform as well as others.
3. Results in the GCSE examination for 16 year olds in 2001 were also very high. The school's GCSE results have been consistently very high over the last three years compared with schools nationally, putting the school in the top five per cent in the country. The trend of improvement has been above the national trend in recent years. In 2001, 99 per cent of pupils gained five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE. In comparison with grammar schools nationally, the school's results were average at GCSE. A comparison of pupils' GCSE results with their prior attainment, as measured by the end of Year 9, shows that pupils at Dane Court School make good progress during Years 10 and 11. Girls make good progress in Years 10 and 11, performed particularly well in 2001 and in line with the national trends, outperformed boys.
4. Analysis of the performance of individual subjects over the last two years indicates consistently well above average attainment in most subjects. In 2000, pupils achieved significantly better results in German, religious studies, geography, combined science, French, biology, physics, sports studies, history and mathematics than the school's averages for other subjects. They did less well in art and design, ICT, drama, English literature, chemistry and design and technology. In 2001, pupils achieved significantly better results in geography, German, physics, religious studies, combined science, business studies, biology and physics, than the school averages for other subjects. They did less well in art and design, drama, sports studies, statistics, history, mathematics and design and technology. The gap between the performance of boys and girls has narrowed in GCSE examinations as well. In 2000 and 2001 there was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in science and mathematics but in 2001, girls achieved better results than boys in English, literature, design and technology, French, geography, ICT and religious studies and boys outperformed girls in history. In 2000, there was no significant difference in their performance in English and English literature.
5. The proportion obtaining grades A\* and A in the GCSE examinations was close to the average for selective schools. Over the last five years the percentage of pupils gaining these highest grades

has improved; from 30.6 per cent in 1997 to 44 per cent in 2001. Nationally, approximately half of those in selective schools obtained grades A\*/A in most subjects. In 2000, at this school, well over fifty per cent did so in German, religious studies, biology, geography, physical education and physics.

6. In lessons seen and in the work of the pupils examined, there were examples of high standards of attainment that reflect the very high achievement in public examinations. Examples of high attainment were seen in most subjects including English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, geography, music and religious studies. In all lessons seen pupils' achievement was at least satisfactory or better. Overall, therefore, the school is challenging pupils whatever their level of prior attainment and they are responding successfully.
7. The inspection evidence confirms that in English, high standards are being maintained in Year 11 and the pupils' achievements are very good. Pupils reach high standards of speaking, listening, reading and writing in English. They listen with confidence to the views of others and are willing to speculate, review and revise their ideas in discussion. Pupils' reading and research skills are very good. In writing, their analysis is precise and supported by relevant textual evidence. Mature vocabulary and critical language are used widely in well structured extended writing. Pupils achieve high standards of literacy across the curriculum. Key words are displayed and pupils engage in a range of speaking activities in many subjects. For example, in modern foreign languages pupils contribute with confidence to discussions, conversations, role play and presentations. In science pupils collaborate effectively to plan investigations before making a carefully structured presentation of their ideas to the whole class. Pupils research and evaluate information very thoroughly. In mathematics, for example, they make extensive notes and organise and present information clearly and logically. In both speaking and writing, pupils' use of technical vocabulary appropriate to the subject is confident and accurate.
8. There is a coherent approach to literacy development across the curriculum. The whole school policy is well supported by individual departments, which identify and pursue aspects of literacy particularly relevant to their own teaching. Following training for all staff in the autumn which focused on spelling and punctuation, reading for information, writing styles and writing non-fiction, clearly defined areas for development have been identified. Of particular significance is the planned expansion of library provision as a source for reading and research.
9. In mathematics, standards are well above average and pupils' achievements are very good. Their knowledge, skills and understanding across all Programmes of Study, are very good in all years with particular strengths in the use of algebra, trigonometry and spatial awareness. Pupils demonstrate very good numeracy skills both in mathematics lessons and in other subjects. Pupils in Year 7 have benefited from their experience of the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools, and they demonstrate a very high level of competence in both mental skills and in work which involves calculators. One group showed confidence in using directed numbers, in drawing graphs using lines of best fit, adding and subtracting fractions and multiplying decimal numbers. Pupils in Year 9 worked well on number patterns to find generalisations and demonstrated a high level of competence in their use of indices and of direct and inverse proportion. The numeracy skills of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are also very good. Pupils demonstrate a good grasp of algebra and trigonometry. By the time they reach Year 11 they handle complex algebraic trigonometrical functions well. Able pupils are extended effectively and know, for example, how to solve complex problems using Sine and Cosine rules.
10. Throughout the school, pupils manipulate numbers confidently and apply numerical and graphical skills in a variety of subjects. They handle data very competently and work knowledgeably with geometric expressions, for example, to calculate areas and distances. They have a very good grasp of all aspects of numeracy including, for example, indices and the solving of linear and quadratic equations by graphical means. These skills enhance their work in other subject areas. Evidence from across the curriculum shows that pupils can handle number and measurement competently, mentally, orally and in writing. They construct and interpret a variety of graphs to analyse numerical and statistical data in a variety of forms, for example in science and geography. They successfully manipulate formulae and perform calculations in science, making sensible use of calculators as necessary.

11. In science, pupils demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and ideas. Pupils, throughout the school, show accurate knowledge and understanding across all Programmes of Study and high attaining pupils quickly demonstrate accurate use of scientific ideas such as: friction, gravity, lung structure and endo and exo-thermic reactions. As a result of the very good opportunities to conduct experiments and experimental research, pupils have very good practical skills and very well developed skills in scientific enquiry and investigation.
12. Standards in most other subjects are above average. In art pupils have good knowledge of colour, texture and patterns. Pupils in a Year 8 class applied imaginatively the ideas of 'warm' and 'cool' colours to their interpretation of Cubist painting. The best pieces integrate effectively ideas gained by comparing another artist's work with pupils' own technical experimentation. In drama, pupils collaborate effectively to write and enact simple plays, engage in lively discussions, critically evaluate their work and use very good drama skills to explore social and moral issues. Pupils studying German and French achieve consistently very good standards in lessons and results are excellent in public examinations. The pupils understand a wide range of the spoken and written language with ease. Musical standards are high. Pupils in Year 11, whilst listening to various piano pieces, demonstrated very good insight into various composers and evaluated confidently pieces of Romantic and Classical music. In physical education pupils are improving their coordination and body management, together with their aesthetic appreciation of movement, to enable expression through non-verbal communication. Most pupils are aware of the health and fitness implications of exercise and they appreciate the benefits of an active and healthy lifestyle.
13. In geography and history pupils demonstrate very good enquiry skills and their factual knowledge and understanding are of a high order. Most pupils in Years 7 and 9 show a firm grasp of geographical skills and very good knowledge and understanding, as illustrated in informed discussions on rainforests and super-volcanoes. Pupils in Years 7-9 demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of historical topics studied such as medieval life and the Gun Powder Plot and pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a good grasp of The Berlin Wall 1961 and the Cold War between the superpowers.
14. In religious studies, there are some good examples of students developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. Pupils generally make sense of what they study and can relate it to their experiences of life. In one lesson, pupils demonstrated a good understanding of Hindu beliefs about death. Through the good use of questioning by the teacher, students developed an understanding of the importance of re-incarnation. In Year 11, pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of issues such as the Muslim attitude towards Jihad in relation to the September 11<sup>th</sup> incident. Through a well-directed discussion, students understood concepts such as belief, reward and punishment and afterlife. They were able to relate these to the Christian view. They are good at linking Christian principles with life experiences.
15. Pupils' ICT skills are good on the whole. Most pupils in Years 7-9 can log on to the network and access appropriate applications. Most pupils can use word processors, spreadsheets and databases. Their own interest and enthusiasm for ICT help to maintain high standards of work. However, the range of programs they use and the variety of ways they apply ICT to work in subjects of the curriculum is not as extensive as it should be. Whilst many of the applications in geography, science, design and technology and modern foreign languages are good, they are mainly the result of the enthusiasm of some teachers and pupils and do not encourage an in-depth working knowledge of a much wider range of computer applications.
16. Pupils with SEN achieve good standards when their prior attainment is taken into account. They are all well known to their teachers and receive appropriate individual help in most lessons. Pupils at the school's action plus stage of the special needs register make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\* - C grades is well above that of schools nationally.
17. Support for pupils for whom English is an additional language is good. As part of the whole school assessment procedures each term, heads of year and key stage managers monitor their performance closely. Pupils who need support with language are swiftly identified. The very few pupils whose understanding of English restricts their access to the curriculum, receive support through the Kent Language Service. Additional support for Chinese speakers is provided by a

member of the mathematics department and all subjects pay careful attention to the teaching of literacy skills. Most pupils for whom English is an additional language enter the school with a good command of English and they achieve as well as their peers.

18. The gifted, talented and more able pupils are achieving high standards in most subjects. Most departments have developed appropriate policies to extend high attaining pupils. Some subjects, such as English, mathematics, science, food technology, religious studies and modern languages, provide extension work to challenge and support them. In music able musicians benefit from instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities. There is a need to monitor, evaluate and promote further these positive developments, including raising parental expectations of their children's potential.

**Outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the governing body enables staff to make a very good contribution to the school's work.**

19. One of the main reasons for the success of the school and the remarkable improvement in the performance of pupils in examinations, particularly at GCSE and A/AS Level, has been the thoughtful, highly effective and purposeful leadership provided by the headteacher. He has a very clear vision of what Dane Court seeks to achieve and has the skill and determination to put in place measures necessary to ensure that the school is successful. This vision is based on good quality curriculum, aiming for excellence with an emphasis on quality teaching and learning. The vision sets high expectations of staff and pupils, who understand and share a strong commitment to commonly agreed goals and values. His style is such that he can make demands of students and staff that bring out the best in them; he does this out of concern for the well being of the community of the school. He enjoys the full confidence of the governing body and manages the staff effectively. He knows their strengths and weaknesses and sets high standards for all within the school community to follow. A number of successful initiatives have included:
- establishment of clear policies to promote effective teaching and learning and social inclusion
  - effective procedures for consultation, planning and review
  - monitoring by the headteacher, governors and by heads of department
  - self-evaluation by all departments, with the support of LEA inspectors
  - detailed scrutiny and evaluation of the GCSE results of individual classes
  - mentoring GCSE students
  - whole-school INSET on effective teaching and learning strategies; raising the attainment of boys; improving management skills and enhancing teachers' ICT skills.
20. These initiatives are having a very positive impact on the ethos of the school and pupils' academic and personal development. There is a very strong level of teamwork and an atmosphere where staff look critically at their own work in a genuine effort to improve learning and develop more effective ways of working. The excellent ethos and family atmosphere contribute to the high standards achieved. There has been significant improvement in all aspects of students' performance both in GCSE and A/AS level examinations. The attendance rates have remained well above the national average and exclusion rates are low.
21. The school is committed to continuous improvement, as is evident from the clear policies and procedures it has established. This commitment is articulated through an improvement plan for 2001-2003. The plan was agreed by staff and governors after an appropriate audit of the curriculum; information on performance indicators, reports from the headteacher and staff and a broad oversight of quality. The plan has many good features, such as clearly defined priorities, tasks, responsible staff, success criteria and strategies for monitoring and evaluation. The plan aims to raise achievement and increase value added contribution for all students but it lacks precise measurable targets.
22. The work of the school is monitored thoroughly, particularly by the headteacher, governors and senior staff. The leadership group, consisting of the headteacher, two deputy headteachers and four assistant headteachers, is very clear about its role and interacts with other members of staff in a usually focused manner. One deputy headteacher has been highly effective in steering curricular planning and tracking the progress of students. He has provided excellent support to the departments to evaluate their examination results and aim to raise standards within their

subjects. The other deputy headteacher has played a major part in staff development and the pastoral care of students. Performance management has been introduced and is proving beneficial to all staff. The school has collaborated with the LEA to develop effective strategies to carry out self-review using a range of performance measures. The headteacher's performance has been evaluated systematically by external assessors. He has appraised the senior managers who in turn monitor, support and challenge the work of heads of the subject departments for which they have responsibility. All senior managers have substantial teaching commitments and work hard to promote consistency in good practice. They have monitored and challenged heads of departments by supporting the school's improvement of the curriculum, management and staff development. There is now a climate of openness in which achievements are celebrated and areas for improvement readily acknowledged.

23. The delegation of responsibilities is well managed and the line management structure provides an effective communication system between middle managers and the senior management team. Most subjects are well managed and heads of subject departments provide very good professional leadership. The leadership of the learning support department is very good. Effective and efficient procedures are in place to manage provision for pupils with special educational needs. Experienced and appropriately qualified learning support assistants have a positive impact on pupils' work. Special educational needs support staff are deployed effectively across the timetable to ensure that those pupils with statements of special educational needs receive the support to which they are entitled.
24. Staff development is given a high priority. The school was awarded Investors in People status in 1999 and was successfully re-accredited in 2001. In-service training is well managed and is linked closely to performance management. Professional development days are well planned and teachers have benefited from in-service training which relates closely to the priorities identified in the school development plan. There are clear, well-documented and highly effective induction programmes for newly qualified teachers. They are offered good support by the headteacher, governors, mentors, their colleagues within their subject departments and the local authority. Staff interviewed found the induction to be useful.
25. The governing body is very supportive, is involved actively in overseeing the work of the school and shares the senior management team's desire for standards in all aspects of school life to be as high as possible. With the exception of collective worship, the governing body meets its statutory duties. Governors contribute a wide range of skills and experience. Academic and financial skills are particularly well represented. Governors understand their role in strategic planning, critical support and monitoring and evaluation. They have established close links with the different areas of the curriculum and are highly effective in monitoring, challenging and participating in the annual review and evaluation. They receive detailed reports on the school's performance from the headteacher, who gives them the best advice possible. The chairman of governors is constantly in touch with the headteacher and is well informed about every aspect of school policy and practice. They readily question policies submitted to them, particularly in respect of curricular planning and pupils' attainment and progress. Constructive links exist between the governors and the special educational needs department. The annual report to parents includes much useful information such as details of the curriculum, the provision for special educational needs, pupils' attainment in public examinations and the headteacher's report given at the annual prize evening.
26. Procedures for financial management and control are effective and efficient. The governors exercise responsible oversight of the school's income and expenditure and this is reflected in the work of the finance committee. The school has up-to-date financial records and controls its expenditure in line with the relevant financial regulations. The school's agreed budget reflects prioritised educational objectives; seeks to achieve value for money and is subject to regular effective monitoring. The governing body ensures that specific grants and other funds are used for their intended purposes. The school applies effectively the principles of best value in decisions about spending. The governing body monitors regularly the school's spending to ensure that it responds effectively to variations from planned income and expenditure. The school's accounts have not been audited since March 1999. The auditors' report was detailed and contained only minor recommendations for improvement which have been acted upon.
27. The day-to-day administration is effective and efficient and there are clear lines of communication both within the school, between the school and parents and with the wider community. Non-

teaching staff perform an invaluable service and aid the smooth running of the school. The combination of improved standards, good teaching, efficient deployment of resources; the promotion of very good attitudes to learning result in the judgement that the school gives very good value for money.

## **The consistently good teaching contributes strongly to effective learning and high standards.**

28. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and makes a substantial contribution to the success of pupils. Teachers have worked hard since the last inspection to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Effective strategies have been developed to improve the quality of teaching and learning in all areas of the curriculum and the school's initiative to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning is having a positive effect, encouraging teachers to share ideas and spread good practice within departments. Teaching and learning were at least satisfactory or better in virtually every lesson. Teaching and learning were good or better in four fifths of the lessons; in four out of ten lessons they were very good or excellent. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. Excellent teaching was observed on two occasions. The high proportion of good teaching confirms the views expressed by parents prior to the inspection.
29. The very good subject knowledge of the teachers is reflected in the confidence with which they prepare their pupils for their examinations. It is also evident in the setting of appropriate challenges to pupils. The level of challenge illustrates the high expectations which teachers have of their pupils, especially in the emphasis placed on the development of critical and analytical faculties, as found in English, mathematics, history, music and religious studies. There is an element of challenge in most subjects that encourages pupils to apply the knowledge and skills they acquire, thus deepening their understanding. In modern foreign languages, pupils are challenged by the extensive use made of the foreign language by teachers. In English, pupils are challenged to reflect and express a personal response to a variety of texts. Across many subjects, teachers skilfully use a range of questioning techniques that encourage pupils to think through a problem and so improve pupils' conceptual thinking – a strong feature particularly of the teaching of religious studies.
30. Lessons are well planned. English lessons have a clear structure that enables pupils to develop their knowledge and skills. Good use of time in modern foreign languages ensures that pupils practise all the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing within a well-chosen variety of activities. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace that maintains pupils' interest in their work.
31. The good teaching throughout the school is founded to a considerable extent on the establishment of very good relationships between the teachers and pupils. Teachers have good control and management skills and good relationships with pupils who benefit from the purposeful and effective atmosphere for learning. There are many opportunities for pupils to engage in discussions amongst themselves or with the teacher. Whether working individually, in groups or as a whole class, pupils develop confidence in asking as well as answering questions in order to improve their learning.
32. Much of the effective learning is in response to teachers' high expectations of pupils and very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, a fact they convey vividly but without imposing undue pressure on the pupils. Teachers ensure that all pupils take part in question and answer sessions and that discussion is not dominated by a few. In geography and history, teachers clarify new ideas and make good use of questions to consolidate pupils' knowledge and deepen their understanding. In mathematics, accurate, competent and well-informed teachers' expositions are used effectively to enable pupils to learn new concepts which they apply to solve challenging problems. In science and in food and textile technology, activities are usually well matched to the learning objectives pupils need to attain. Pupils make very good gains in their learning. They learn new skills quickly and develop good understanding of new ideas as a result of the interesting and demanding work given to them. High attaining pupils, for example, are able to research in geography, handle evidence in history and solve complex problems in mathematics.
33. In the more effective lessons teachers use a good variety of strategies to promote independent learning and personal enquiries. In science, investigations are chosen which give very clear opportunities for independent learning. Teachers make good use of resources, and lessons are usually conducted at a brisk pace to achieve objectives. For example, in a Year 9 geography lesson the powerful use of video helped pupils to understand that the study of rocks provides

evidence for super-volcanoes. In one unsatisfactory lesson, the study skills were not suitable for pupils with special educational needs and they did not achieve as well as they might.

34. The teaching of basic skills is very good and the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is very effective. This ensures a solid foundation on which achievement in other subjects can be based. Language is used effectively to challenge and deepen pupils' understanding and the good use of probing questions ensures that pupils explain their answers and think reflectively about issues. Key words and structures are identified on the board in a number of subjects and pupils are asked routinely to make connections, which increases their range of English vocabulary as well as helping them to understand unfamiliar words. Pupils are given good opportunities for oral presentations, which encourage them to speak with confidence and listen attentively to others. High standards of presentation and accuracy are expected, and spelling and grammatical mistakes usually are corrected. In science and mathematics pupils use mental arithmetic. Pupils use their ICT skills in geography, science, design and technology and modern foreign languages for research and to reinforce learning.
35. Homework is usually used effectively to consolidate and extend learning. In English, mathematics, history and geography, teachers set imaginative tasks for homework which require much use of research skills. Homework is usually relevant and constructive in preparing pupils for the following lessons but there are not enough examples of challenging tasks for high attaining pupils. Assessment is used satisfactorily in most subjects to inform planning. Marking in many subjects is good and reinforces pupils' awareness of how well they are doing. In subjects such as English, mathematics, history, geography and religious studies teachers give much helpful advice and feedback and pupils receive valuable information about how to improve. The GCSE coursework assignments are marked thoroughly, often using examination criteria. In a minority of subjects, marking is less useful; teachers do not define clearly enough what pupils must do in order to improve their performance.

**The school provides a broad range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities; the educational provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.**

36. The school aims to promote academic excellence and to provide the highest possible quality of education for all pupils in a supportive and encouraging environment. The school provides all pupils with a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which fulfils its aims and provides appropriate opportunities to learn and to experience achievement and success. In Years 7-9, all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education, are taught. In Year 7 and 9 ICT is taught as a separate subject. In addition pupils study French and German in Years 7- 8, though about 20 pupils study one modern foreign language and are taught study skills in place of a second foreign language.
37. In Years 10 and 11, the curricular provision is very good. All pupils study a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which includes an extended core of English, literature, mathematics, three separate sciences or a double award science course, design and technology, religious studies and a modern language French or German. All pupils also follow a general course in physical education and a personal social and health education (PSHE) programme which includes careers, health and sex education, education for citizenship, environmental education and economic and industrial understanding. The school makes commendable efforts to cater for the aptitudes of all by making good use of flexible arrangements to allow pupils to study optional subjects from geography, history, religious studies, a second modern language, art, business studies, music, physical education, drama, and information systems. Most pupils take a total of ten subjects at GCSE level. Parents are very pleased with these arrangements. The curriculum is planned effectively in most subjects and provides continuity and progression both within, and across, years.
38. Overall, provision by the learning support department for pupils with special needs is good. All pupils, with special educational needs, who enter Dane Court Grammar School have proven academic potential. Reasons for pupils being classified as special educational needs include: physical or visual impairment or behavioural difficulties, medical conditions and specific learning

difficulties. In addition the special educational needs register includes pupils with minor visual or aural problems. The co-ordinator maintains very clear records and keeps the progress of these pupils under constant informal review. Liaison with subject departments raises teachers' awareness of the nature of the difficulties faced by these pupils and most, but not all, subject departments maintain subject-specific individual education plans. There are seven learning support assistants who have received appropriate specialist training and support effectively the visually impaired, emotional and behavioural difficulties and autistic pupils. There is a range of flexible strategies to meet the needs of these pupils. However, the study skills are not always suitable for Year 8 pupils who will have achieved National Curriculum Level 4 at the end of Year 6.

39. The range of extra-curricular activity, both within subjects and in the school at large, is extensive and often of high quality, affording social, cultural, intellectual and sporting opportunities for pupils. Both parents and pupils commented on the hard work and commitment of staff. The level of involvement on the part of pupils is very high. There are many opportunities for pupils to take part in musical and dramatic performances. Many pupils enjoy participating in several choirs, orchestra and jazz workshops and the two drama productions which are staged every year. The school produces every year a major music concert in the Winter Gardens, which is attended by over 600 parents, friends of the school and members of the Broadstairs community. The headteacher and staff participate enthusiastically in the school's choirs and inspire pupils to enjoy music. Sporting activities are well represented and the standards achieved are high. The curriculum is further enhanced by visits to places of interest locally, nationally and internationally. Sports fixtures bring pupils into contact with other schools and the choir and orchestra have toured Italy, Germany and USA. This wide and comprehensive provision contributes much to the social development of pupils as well as enhancing their learning experiences.

**There is a high standard of care for pupils. The very good ethos of the school results in a harmonious community where mutual respect and mature attitudes are fostered very successfully.**

40. The very positive ethos of the school makes a valuable contribution to the provision of a very safe and caring environment in which every pupil is well supported and valued. The school successfully establishes an ethos of mutual trust and respect. This is partly achieved by very clear communication of expectations of behaviour and academic study and partly through the care and consideration provided to each individual pupil. Learning is at the heart of the school's work and pupils are at ease in their surroundings. The school has a strong commitment to social inclusion. Pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds are well integrated into the school and receive the same care and support as other pupils. There are harmonious relationships at all levels. There is no evidence of bullying, sexism or racism. Very strong pastoral support is provided by the caring staff. Pupils respond well to this and appreciate the work the staff do for them and the opportunities the school provides.
41. Form tutors, heads of Year, Key Stage managers and all other adults know the pupils very well and they work well as a team to promote the pupils' personal welfare and to make them feel safe and secure. The ethos of the school is one of respect and self-discipline which is very successful in promoting good behaviour. The expectations of the staff, together with the very good policies and procedures for promoting good behaviour, result in behaviour, both in lessons and elsewhere, that is very good. Sanctions are used in a consistent way and the ultimate sanction of exclusion is only applied in a very small number of instances. The exclusion rate is very low. Only one pupil was permanently excluded during the year prior to the inspection. Pupils, parents and staff think that bullying is not a problem and they are confident that it would be appropriately dealt with if it should occur. The prevention of bullying, racism and sexism and the promotion of good behaviour are underpinned by the ethos of the school and promoted through a variety of means such the tutorial programme, PSHE and assemblies.
42. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment, progress and personal development are good. Information is collected and analysed on pupils' academic achievement from a range of tests on entry to the school. Assessment is used well in most subjects to inform planning though the quality of marking varies. Most pupils receive valuable information about how to improve, while for others it is less useful. Some subjects, such as English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, history, and geography, give much helpful advice and feedback on how to improve.

Teachers monitor pupils' progress rigorously and intervene appropriately. There are very good systems in place for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development. Not only is achievement monitored effectively but also the pupils' efforts are assessed and recorded systematically.

43. The school's health and safety policy forms a very good basis for ensuring the safety and welfare of the pupils and staff. Governors take an active interest in monitoring health and safety matters. Regular risk assessments are carried out and electrical appliances, fire extinguishers and physical equipment are checked regularly for safety. There are trained staff who provide very good first aid, when required.
44. The child protection practices are very good and are based on the locally agreed procedures. The Key Stage 3 manager is the designated teacher and all staff know this. Child protection matters are referred to in the 'Staff Handbook' and form part of the induction of all new staff. The designated teacher has been involved in providing training for staff of other schools.
45. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They are engaged fully by the work of their lessons and respond well to the challenge of the tasks and the interest engendered by their teachers' commitment, knowledge and enthusiasm. Pupils are keen to do well and concentrate on tasks set. They listen attentively and assimilate new information and ideas quickly. They work well in pairs and groups, collaborating effectively and responding well when given opportunities to show initiative. Most pupils are highly motivated and are confident in suggesting ideas, valuing each other's ideas and building on them. Many demonstrated considerable responsibility and independence in their learning. In science, music, art, ICT and physical education they show respect for equipment and work competently, with proper regard for safety.
46. The personal and social development of pupils has been addressed in a careful manner. It clearly maps all aspects of pupils' personal and social development throughout their school career. The number of opportunities to exercise initiative and responsibility varies considerably in different years but where they occur pupils respond in a mature manner and gain self-esteem. However, there is further scope for developing pupils' sense of responsibility, personal initiative and leadership skills and for providing opportunities for them to contribute to the community through such activities as the school council, clubs, presenting assemblies or becoming involved in mini-enterprises.
47. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good and absences are followed up. As a result attendance rates are good and the unauthorised absence rate is very low. Pupils' very good attendance and punctuality at the school have a beneficial effect on their standard of attainment since it means that they can consolidate their learning over a sustained and uninterrupted period.

### **Parents' views of the school are very positive and parental support for the school is very good**

48. Parents are generally very pleased with the school and the education it provides for their children. Parents are strongly supportive of the school and gave evidence of this in their very good responses, 531 returns to the inspection questionnaire. A very high proportion of parents who returned the questionnaires or attended the pre-inspection meeting felt that the school's expectations of their children are high and that the staff expect pupils to work hard and achieve their best. They felt well informed about their children's progress and were comfortable in approaching the school with any worries or concerns. They considered both teaching and behaviour to be good. Statements in the questionnaire about leadership and management and the positive impact of the school's ethos on pupils' personal development were very positive. The findings of the inspection team support the very positive views of the majority of parents.
49. A few parents expressed concern about how closely the school works with them and about the quality and range of homework. Some would welcome a more demanding and consistent homework assignments and structured approach to GCSE coursework assignments. The inspection team had no real concern about homework. Homework is set and marked in most subjects to reinforce and extend learning in the classroom, although the quality of tasks set varies

in the demands made on pupils. For example some of the tasks set at times are not sufficiently challenging, particularly for the higher attaining pupils.

50. The school works hard to achieve an effective partnership with parents. Parents are supplied with very good quality information about the school in the form of newsletters three times a term, the very informative prospectus, the governors' report and homework diaries. They are kept well informed of their children's progress and achievements by the end of year reports and by termly reports on their children's efforts and achievement. The parents of each year group are invited to an evening consultation meeting where they can discuss the children's progress. Additional evenings are held at significant points in the pupils' school life such as shortly after joining the school, when making choices for GCSE and sixth form courses and when considering higher education. The attendance at these meetings is usually over 90 per cent.
51. There is a good partnership between the parents and the school and most parents have high opinions of the school that are fully justified. The Parent Association is a lively body and aims to be involved in the life of the school. The association arranges social events to forge closer links between the home and the school. It raises funds to support educational initiatives. Through its partnerships with many friends of the school and institutions beyond, the school provides its pupils with educational opportunities which will equip them well to become full participants in the community. The headteacher and governing body are keen to strengthen further the relationships with parents and the wider community.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **There is a need to improve provision for personal and social education in Years 8 and 9.**

52. The school has made some progress in providing a well-planned personal, social and health education programme in Years 9, 10 and 11. In these years the personal and social development of pupils is nurtured in a careful manner. The PSHE programme is comprehensive and provides opportunities for pupils to explore and discuss pertinent issues and make informed decisions. There is no structured PSHE programme in Years 8 and 9. Every fortnight the school timetable is suspended to allow aspects of the PSHE programme to be taught. Pupils in these years also study some aspects of inter-personal relationships and moral and social issues in religious studies lessons and the biological aspects of growing up are taught through National Curriculum science. These arrangements are unsatisfactory, as some very important aspects are not taught systematically.

### **Departmental priorities for improvement need to be defined more precisely.**

53. The school's development plan is an effective document which is linked appropriately to its mission statement, aims and values but it lacks precision. There are appropriate criteria for success, a clear allocation of responsibilities and realistic timescales but all the school's precise priorities are not defined clearly. Departmental development plans are variable in quality. Subject plans are not linked specifically to the school's performance targets and do not focus on value added improvement at the end of all key stages. They do not include measurable targets and clearly defined criteria against which improvement can be measured.

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

54. The key issue is maintenance of, and building on, existing high standards. No serious weaknesses were noted. In order to sustain and continue to develop the good work, the governors and senior management of Dane Court Grammar School, with the support of the local education authority, should now:

- **Ensure that key priorities for school improvement are defined precisely by:**
  - including precise priorities in the school's development plan.

- setting subject specific measurable targets to determine value added achievement between key stages.
- Defining clear success criteria against which the improvement can be measured.
- (paragraph 21, 52, 101 )
  
- **improve the timetabled provision of personal, social and health education in Years 8 and 9 to ensure that all aspects of PSHE are taught systematically.**
- (paragraph 52)
  
- When drawing up the action plan, it is recommended that attention is also given to:
  - Wider applications of ICT (see paragraph 15)
  - Opportunities to exercise initiative and responsibility (See paragraph 46)
  - Homework (see paragraphs 35, 49)
  - Audit of the school's accounts (See paragraph 26)

## **Sixth Form: Areas for improvement**

55. In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, governors and staff of the school should:

- **further raise students' performance in mathematics and sports studies by**
  - challenging students in mathematics and physical education to explain their answers and reasoning and inviting them to suggest possible ways forward in solving problems.
  - Increasing the use of ICT to enhance learning in mathematics.
  - (paragraph 57, 107,153)
- **Improve ICT provision by :**
  - identifying opportunities to raise standards further in each subject of the curriculum through the use of ICT;
  - monitoring the progressive development of ICT skills across the curriculum.
  - (See paragraphs 63, 112, 139, 152, 162)
- **Improve accommodation and learning resources in English, mathematics, design and technology and ICT.**
  - (See paragraphs 132, 139,140, 150,180)
- When drawing up the action plan, it is recommended that attention is also given to:
  - Spiritual development (See paragraph 84)
  - Assessment (See paragraph 90)
  - Advice on careers (See paragraphs 96 and 97)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	53
	Sixth form	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		35

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	2	20	20	10	1	0	0
Percentage	4	38	38	18	2	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	3	34	17	7	0	0	0
Percentage	5	56	28	10	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. [When the total number observed in either the main school or the sixth form is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for [enter Years [ ] – [ ] and/or the sixth form here] as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100 in both, use only the first sentence.]

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y 7 – Y 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	872	276
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	44	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y 7 – Y 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	69	5

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	24

<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	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

### Attendance

Authorised absence

%
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Unauthorised absence

%
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School data	5.5
National comparative data	8.1

School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	85	102	187

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	82	85	84
	Girls	99	99	100
	Total	181	184	184
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	97 (98)	98 (96)	98 (97)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	79 (80)	93 (94)	93 (90)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	85	85
	Girls	100	100	100
	Total	185	185	185
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (99)	99 (100)	99 (100)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	83 (86)	98 (99)	84 (86)
	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	80	93	173

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	80	80	80
	Girls	91	92	93
	Total	171	172	173
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	99 (99)	99 (100)	100 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (99)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	61.3 (59.7)

per pupil	National	39.0 (38.4)
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*Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	58	56	114

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	24.1	30	27 ( 24)	NA	NA	NA (NA)
National	16.9	17.9	17.4 (17.6)	Na	NA	NA

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	3
Indian	8
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	9
White	1112
Any other minority ethnic group	10

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	7	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	77.35
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.84

#### Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	452

#### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.8
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#### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Years 7-9	25.85
Years 10 and 11	20.03

FTE means full-time equivalent.

### Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	2993366
Total expenditure	3026997
Expenditure per pupil	2690
Balance brought forward from previous year	136272
Balance carried forward to next year	102641

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.25
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	None
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.95
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	None

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1148
Number of questionnaires returned	531

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	53	7	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	45	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	59	3	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	60	12	1	2
The teaching is good.	39	56	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	52	10	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	46	6	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	28	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	29	52	13	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	45	48	3	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	50	4	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	50	6	2	8

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

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

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

56. There has been a significant improvement in all aspects of students' performance. At GCE Advanced level in 2001, the pass rate was very high in comparison with that of all maintained schools. In 2000 and 2001, the average A/AS point score of candidates entered for two or more GCE A-levels or AS equivalent was well above the national average. The average A/AS point score of students entered for two or more GCE A-levels has improved substantially from 18.5 in 1997 to 27.2 per cent in 2001. There is a corresponding increase in point score per entry from 6.02 in 1997 to 6.75 in 2001. Both boys and girls do equally well. Ethnic minority students also do equally well, although the numbers were too small to be statistically significant. The school analyses its results thoroughly and monitors carefully the performance of different groups. The school takes particular care to integrate about twenty students who join the sixth form each year from other schools, making sure that they are able to cope with the demands placed on them.
57. A close scrutiny of A and AS-level results indicates a consistent and upward trend but there have been considerable variations across subjects over the last four years. The differences in attainment between subjects are partly due to the calibre of students and partly due to the overall effectiveness of teaching in subjects. Although attainment is high overall, not all sixth form courses are successful in bringing the best out of the students. In 2001, results were very high in biology, physics and religious studies; well above average in media studies, English literature, French, general studies, geography and sociology; above average in art and design, chemistry, computer studies, economics, design and technology, German, history and average in mathematics and sports studies.
58. Students have performed consistently well in biology, English literature, French, general studies, geography, German and religious studies over the years. Their performance has improved significantly in art and design, business studies, chemistry, design and technology, history, music and sociology and declined slightly in mathematics. The percentage of A and B grades has improved substantially from 35 per cent in 1996 to 50 per cent in 2001. In 2001, in terms of the highest grades A and B at A-level, the school's achievement in comparison with all schools was high in biology, media studies, English literature, French, music, physics and sociology; below average in mathematics; low in sports studies and close to the national average in all other subjects. Comparative data were not available for 2001. French results in 2001, were outstandingly good, with 100 per cent of students reaching grades A or B. In other subjects, well over 50 per cent reached the highest grades A and B in biology, English literature, religious studies and sociology but in other subjects these proportions were below the 2000 averages for selective schools.
59. The new AS courses were examined for the first time in 2001. A good understanding of the new examinations was an important factor contributing to above average AS results. Just over 50 per cent of all entries reached the higher grades A and B. There were high performances in biology, chemistry, English, geography, history, media studies, mathematics, physical education, politics, psychology, religious studies, sociology and theatre studies. In all these subjects, well over half the number entered obtained the higher grades A and B. Results were broadly average in other subjects.
60. Overall, students' achievement is good in the sixth form, in light of their previous GCSE results. In the work seen during the inspection and from an examination of files, students' achievements were very good in French, physical education, physics, religious studies and sociology. In other subjects inspected in detail, their achievements were good in English, mathematics, business studies, chemistry, history and ICT and satisfactory in design and technology.
61. Although the key skills of communication, the application of number and ICT are not taught discretely, standards in literacy and numeracy are high for most students and satisfactory in ICT. In the sixth form, students are highly articulate and display sophisticated reasoning in discussion of texts. They confidently express a personal point of view both orally and in writing, and analyse

language and meaning in depth. In essays, most students display mature and detailed evaluation of textual features. In the sixth form most students make highly effective oral contributions. In mathematical investigations, for example, students are very good at hypothesising and speculating in discussions. In modern foreign languages students collaborate well when discussing abstract topics. High quality reading and writing skills are demonstrated extensively. Students research topics very thoroughly, using a range of evidence which reveals their wide reading. In many subjects, for instance biology, intensive training in planning, drafting and essay writing is provided, and most students write fluently and accurately. There is much evidence of structured evaluation in their writing, for example in sociology coursework, where all students reveal sophisticated and mature judgements in their conclusion.

62. Students' achievements in mathematics are good. Teachers build successfully on the high standards of numeracy and algebra established at GCSE, and in the A-level course use confidently a wide range of mathematical methods to solve problems. Evidence from across the curriculum shows students can interpret and use numerical and statistical data in a variety of forms. In A-level physics and chemistry they can solve problems involving simple equations.
63. When required to do so, students use ICT skills confidently. In the sixth form, many students use word processing skills for the presentation of their essays and course work assignments and access the Internet to increase the breadth of their knowledge and understanding. All students make good progress in their learning and demonstrate good ICT skills. In some subjects, there are examples of very good applications of ICT which enhance teaching and learning. In biology, chemistry and religious studies ICT is well integrated within the curriculum and all students make very good use of ICT skills to experiment and enhance their work. Opportunities in several subjects are not as frequent as they might be. Students in Years 12 and 13 need more opportunities to learn how to use ICT in other A and AS-level subjects.

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

64. Students' attitudes to the school are very good. Almost all Year 11 students continue their studies in the sixth form and most continue into higher education. The school has created an orderly community and students interviewed both formally and informally describe their life in the sixth form as enjoyable and rewarding. Their attitudes to work are very good and they behave sensibly and often enthusiastically in all lessons. They demonstrate a very mature attitude towards their studies, and have a clear and focused view about their own future.
65. Students react well to the many opportunities the school offers. In lessons, they take great pride in their work in order to achieve the best possible results. Their analytical and evaluative skills are highly developed and these enable them to approach their work with confidence and maturity. Beyond lessons, they participate in a range of activities, theatre trips and visits that widen their horizons and help them to become responsible citizens. School drama productions, sixth form reviews and the debating society are good examples of where students are actively involved in school life. There is good participation in sporting activities.
66. Student behaviour is very good, both in lessons and around the school. They work in a productive manner, collaborate very well, and are respectful of the values, attitudes and beliefs of each other. They provide excellent role models for younger pupils. Prefects take their duties seriously and they make a good contribution to the calm atmosphere in the school as a whole.
67. Students form very constructive relationships with their teachers and with one another. They relate very strongly with those teachers whose teaching is effective and who show them respect. The quality of these relationships is a great strength in the sixth form. It enables open and honest dialogue to take place where students demonstrate their confidence in challenging the views, attitudes and beliefs of others. They develop very good inter-personal skills and these qualities are reflected in their work. Many students wish to continue their studies in higher education. There is no evidence of bullying, sexism or racism. The school rightly prides itself on its commitment to social inclusion.
68. Students are very aware of the impact that their actions can have on others. The general atmosphere in the school encourages all students to develop their own self-discipline. They have a healthy respect for other peoples' viewpoints. Very good discussions in both religious studies

and English demonstrated that students are careful not to dismiss summarily the opinions of others even though they may disagree. They have highly developed viewpoints on many ethical issues and their skills in evaluation are demonstrated in their ability to form sound moral judgments. They are always open to new ideas.

69. Students do show initiative and take responsibility for their own actions. In their relationships, they show sincere respect for each other, very good moral awareness and social responsibility. Students take responsibility for a wide range of school activities such as speaking at parents evenings and induction days. They have highly developed social skills and personal qualities and they demonstrate these in discussions, debates and everyday conversation. They show, on many occasions that they are prepared to forego their own immediate interests for a common good. Overall, the attitudes, values and personal development displayed by students enhance their learning considerably.

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

70. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. During the inspection all teaching observed was at least satisfactory and nearly nine out of ten lessons were at least good. Around six out of every ten lessons were judged very good or excellent. The very good teaching in most subjects is the main determinant of the success of students in their sixth form courses. These findings support the level of satisfaction expressed by parents and students prior to the inspection. They also represent an improvement on the findings of the last inspection. Much of the teaching is challenging at the very highest level. Teaching is excellent in sports studies, very good in English, French, biology, physics, religious studies and sociology, and good in biology, business studies, chemistry, design and technology, history, ICT and mathematics.
71. Strengths of the teaching include the teachers' subject knowledge and understanding which enable them to confidently approach the syllabus, pose and answer questions which challenge the students' thinking. The very good subject knowledge of the teachers promotes positive attitudes and ensures that work is pitched at appropriate levels. Teachers pass on their knowledge with confidence. Enthusiasm for the subject enables teachers to interest and motivate students in sports studies and sociology. Confident and extensive use of fluent French by teachers sets an appropriate challenge to students in their foreign language lessons. Students demonstrate high levels of literacy, which are developed further by opportunities to engage in analytical discussions in sociology lessons and to compare different language patterns in French.
72. Detailed planning gives lessons a clear focus in most subjects. In sports studies continuity of approach throughout the sixth form course helps students to progress confidently. Expectations are high and students are challenged frequently. They are required to think for themselves and justify their opinions. The very good relationships that exist between teachers and students in all subjects create an atmosphere in the classroom that ensures that students rise to the challenges set before them. In French, rigorous correction of errors reminds students of the importance of accuracy in language use. In English and sociology, students are encouraged to reflect on ideas in discussion rather than simply to offer description, and through the teachers' perceptive questioning they learn to analyse, to reflect upon and to make judgements on a broad range of issues. Learning in religious studies is enhanced by the use of paired discussions that help students to deepen their understanding; similarly by having their views challenged by the teacher or by their fellow students, the development of critical faculties is sharpened. In mathematics, students apply successfully their knowledge to new situations and make very good progress in problem solving. Students praised the support and helpfulness of teachers and their availability and willingness to offer help at any time. In biology lessons, demands are made on students to answer precisely and to use terms accurately. Students respond very positively to the opportunities such teaching offers. Their learning skills are very good. They work hard and persevere to solve problems and overcome difficulties themselves.
73. Teachers strike a very good balance between class teaching and independent or group learning in lessons and also between theory and practical work. Students of French are encouraged by their teachers to become independent learners and the use of the Internet to research coursework contributes towards the increase in individualised work for many students.

74. Well-chosen resources support the very good learning of students in sociology, where materials are used as an effective stimulus for discussion as well as for reference and consolidation of learning. In physics, effective use of the whiteboard, of the overhead projector and of teacher-produced worksheets enables students to follow instructions and understand the development of concepts introduced to them.
75. Very effective assessment procedures, which focus strongly on the needs and progress of individuals, enable students to be aware of their own strengths and of how to improve their performance in areas where they are weak. In design and technology, more formal procedures would provide additional motivation.

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

76. The quality and range of opportunities offered to students in the sixth form are very good. Students are able to choose from 29 subjects, together with a well-planned general studies course, which are all offered at AS and A-level. The very few pupils for whom these choices do not appeal are offered good advice from outside agencies. About ten students pursue advanced vocational courses at the local further education college or at neighbouring secondary schools where opportunities and supporting facilities are very good.
77. The key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are integrated into the subjects (see paragraphs 62-64 above). These arrangements have been particularly successful in, for example, history and sociology whose students are able to take notes well, plan essays and present a point of view effectively. Students' numeracy skills support them well. However, the provision for ICT is not well planned, except for the minority who take computer studies, because delivery is dependent on the subject specialists. All students have full access to a weekly general studies lesson in which students show understanding and sensitivity to various social and moral issues. The moral and ethical topics which comprise a small part of the course are well chosen and appropriate for sixth form students. The allocation of time is limited, but all students are receiving the statutory religious education requirements. In Year 12, students must participate in weekly sports sessions for the first half of every term.
78. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good and students are encouraged to take part in a wide range of sporting, musical and dramatic activities. The extensive subject provision and the number of AS courses chosen by students have curtailed the amount of time available for private study and extra curricular activities. The two private study periods are supervised and the two non-contact lessons may be used for a programme of visiting speakers, who are usually concerned with topics directly relevant to everyday life. The Inland Revenue, for example, has recently explained taxation in relation to student grants and part time work.
79. Despite the increased demands of AS courses, many students accept school responsibilities such as being prefects and form representatives. In the Year 7 Medieval Banquet, which is a major cross curricular event involving English, history and other departments, sixth formers are responsible for much of the organisation of the event. They participate in debates and take an active part in the local Model United Nations.
80. The sixth form curriculum has been planned carefully. The school tries to reconcile the needs of subjects, key skills and the development of personal interests and responsibilities. There is constant evaluation and a readiness to modify, if necessary.
81. Students receive good guidance both on entering the sixth form and during their course. There is a two-day induction period after GCSE examinations when all potential Year 12 students follow a sixth form timetable. In their first week in Year 12, all attend a one day study skills course organised by specialist consultants. The demands of AS courses have reduced work experience to one week in term time. Modern language students are able to pursue this overseas. During the fortnightly form period, students receive individual guidance on progress and, as necessary, help with university applications. Almost all students choose a university course and they receive sound and helpful advice. For those seeking employment, the school relies on the local careers

service which, during a period of reorganisation, has not always fulfilled the needs of the individuals.

82. The provision for careers education for students pursuing non-university options, is just satisfactory, but with some weaknesses. The school provides opportunities for students to access careers information in the library and through software packages. Staff are always willing to guide and support students with their choices but external advice from the careers service could be improved.
83. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is good overall. Provision for moral and social development is very good. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. There are several examples of these dimensions in the school's documentation, including a whole school policy for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. There is no co-ordination of this aspect in the sixth form. The general studies course does provide some opportunities for the SMSC development of students, and the RE element enables the school to address partly the statutory requirement. Assemblies tend to address moral and social issues and rarely constitute worship. Statutory requirements for collective worship are not met.
84. Provision for students' spiritual development is generally satisfactory. The general studies programme does provide some opportunities for spiritual development. Topics that relate religion to life experiences challenge students to think about, and reflect on, the meaning of life. Assemblies do take place twice each week. They provide occasional opportunities for students to reflect on their lives. Topics such as learning to love and the power of love at Christmas enable students to reflect on issues such as showing and accepting love and the gift of life. There are very few curriculum opportunities for spiritual development. Some subjects make a contribution to this aspect. For example, in the A-level religious studies examination course students were able to explore their attitudes and values through a study of the work of several philosophers. In English, a challenging exploration of John Donne's metaphysical poetry enabled Year 12 students to reflect on the concept of the "soul".
85. Provision for moral development is very good. The school has clear expectations of students knowing right from wrong and students respond extremely well on the rare occasions when they are corrected. The sixth form students are very good role models for the rest of the school. They are involved as prefects and, as senior students; they provide leadership and exercise moral responsibility. Assemblies make a contribution to this area. For example, topics such as right and wrong, communal responsibilities, relationships and rules and law enable students to reflect on moral matters and to form judgements about them. Several subjects contribute well in providing opportunities for moral development. In religious studies, pupils are able to respond to aspects of morality using their knowledge of religious and ethical issues. In examination subjects, students are encouraged to develop moral attitudes and to share these with others in an atmosphere of respect.
86. Provision for social development is very good. There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility and develop their social skills. The curriculum provision and approach to examination work by teachers provide many opportunities for social development. The general studies course provides a very good range of social topics that enable students to develop their awareness of the needs of others. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and a termly debating society enable students to develop their skills in public speaking. Students take responsibility for many school activities including speaking at parents' evenings, prize giving and induction days. They run their own tuck shop, form friends and buddy teams and, as prefects, they provide good leadership in the main school. This enables them to develop a keen awareness of the needs of younger students. Work experience placements help to enhance their appreciation of the world of work. Most subjects make a significant contribution to social development by providing opportunities for students to express their views in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The use of discussion in most examination subjects provides further opportunities for students to enhance their interpersonal skills and develop good relationships.
87. Provision for students' cultural development is good. One of the key aims of the school is to produce well-rounded individuals who are aware of the rich cultural opportunities that exist in, and outside, of their own community. There are several opportunities for students to be involved in

activities that extend their cultural development. The school's curriculum, however, does not provide planned opportunities for students to develop an awareness of the variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country. Students take the opportunities available to them to visit the theatre and go on field trips. Their involvement in musical activities and drama productions enables students to deepen their cultural awareness. Their work in examination subjects allows students to challenge their own cultural assumptions and to debate issues that help them to change their views about cultural issues.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SIXTH FORM CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

### Assessment

88. The school's assessment of students' academic performance is helpful, constructive and effective and contributes significantly to the achievement of high standards. Assessment policies within individual subjects are incorporated within their schemes of work. Individual subject teachers and tutors are expected to track the academic progress of their students. Students' work is assessed regularly in most subjects: assessment procedures are well developed within in biology, French, history, physics and sociology and are good in other subjects. Assessment is usually thorough and includes some constructive advice. In English, for example, students have a clear idea of the assessment criteria and a number of subjects including mathematics, set regular tests and other assessments that are related to the external examinations. Teachers use the very good relationships they have with students to help them to understand what they have to do raise their levels of achievements.
89. The school carries out a thorough analysis of students' prior GCSE performance and has developed its own system for estimating predicted grades. This information is used well in some subjects. In biology, physics, history and French, for example, the predicted grades are discussed effectively with students to raise expectations. Some subjects include the regular use of self-assessment whereby students identify for themselves their strengths and weaknesses and take necessary action. In other subjects, peer assessment, teacher evaluation and portfolios of work, assessed collectively by teachers, provide effective monitoring of students' progress. Good support is offered to students whose special needs have been identified. A large majority of students and parents indicated that assessment procedures at the school were good.
90. Students' work is marked regularly and in some subjects, for example in English and sociology, marking is rigorous and frequently contains explanatory or encouraging comments and advice on how work may be improved. In English, the teachers' commentaries are very full. Much classroom feedback reinforces written comments, which contribute to students' ability to assess their own performance. Weaknesses in the developing system include assessment being focused more sharply on knowledge acquired rather than on targets to develop understanding and skills. Short-term target-setting has not yet been developed fully as an assessment tool, or to fully challenge the highest attaining students. In many lessons, however, good verbal feedback gives students the opportunity to assess their progress accurately in relation to the requirements of their courses, but this is not consistent across all subjects, and does not provide adequate focus on the requirements of the highest grades.

### Advice, support and guidance

91. The overall provision of advice, support and guidance to students in the sixth form is very good as is that provided to those about to enter the sixth form. This latter support and guidance is aimed at enabling students to choose the courses that best suit their talents and career aspirations. Over eighty per cent of the very large number of students who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire thought that the school was successful in this respect.
92. The very good advice and guidance on choosing the right course in higher education is an essential ingredient of the school's support programme for its sixth form students. Its success is demonstrated by the very high percentage of students who go to universities. Each student has a "Sixth Form Profile" document that enables them to keep together the important information that will help them gain a place on a course of their choice. These profile documents not only contain details of the student's achievements but also contain much useful advice on matters such as making applications, comparing courses and making the most of open days. Students who have the potential and desire to go to Oxford or Cambridge Universities are given special coaching to help them succeed. Those students who intend taking a course such as Law or Education where appropriate work experience is desirable are given opportunities to gain this experience. The one part of the provision that needs improving is the quality of the advice and support given to the very small number of students who do not intend going into higher education.

93. The vast majority of the students who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire were happy with their sixth form courses and thought they were well taught by teachers who were willing to help them if they had difficulties with their work. The findings of the inspection team support these positive views.
94. Some students would value greater independence and the opportunity to demonstrate that they are young adults by, for example, not having their self study supervised or not having to be in school when they have no lessons or tutorials. The school intends the sixth form to provide a bridge leading from compulsory pre-16 education to a successful entry into higher education. The balance between direction and independence that the school provides may not meet with the approval of all students but it does produce highly successful results. These results are achieved not only by the quality of teaching but also by the advice, support and guidance provided by a dedicated and caring staff.
95. The very good health and safety policies and practices ensure that the students study in a safe environment and the good monitoring procedures ensure a good attendance by the students.

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

96. Parents are very supportive of the sixth form. All parents agree that the school sets high expectations, none disagree that behaviour is good, and very few doubt that the school is well led and managed, and that their children are helped to become mature and responsible. In particular, they feel that the teaching is good; their children work hard and make good progress. Parents were satisfied with the regularity and appropriateness of parents' evenings and the information they receive about their children's progress. Those who attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting were full of praise for the ease with which they can make contact with the school and seek its help and advice. They also praised the school for the wide range of opportunities given to students to demonstrate their care for their community, which they said added to the richness of their children's' school lives.
97. Students are also very appreciative of the school's provision in the sixth form. They value the support that their teachers give and feel that they achieve well. Students who join the school from other schools are welcomed and quickly become part of the Dane Court community. The students' concerns apparent in their questionnaires, relate mostly to insufficient advice about careers; a paucity of extra-curricular activities and not being treated as adults. Whilst the teaching programme and the demands of examinations are heavy and there is limited free time during the school day there are many extra-curricular activities, which take place outside normal school hours and in which students could become involved. Inspectors agree, however, that the advice and information provided for students intending to take up employment on leaving school could be improved. The sixth form committee provides a forum for debate with teachers and senior managers of the school who listen carefully to the views of students.

### **HOW WELL IS THE SIXTH FORM LED AND MANAGED?**

#### **Leadership and management**

98. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The management strategy is based on shared goals to maintain and improve performance. The headteacher, ably supported by his deputy heads, offers a clear sense of direction and purpose for the whole school and takes an active part in ensuring that the sixth form provision is consistent with the school's ethos and adds value to other aspects of school. The head of sixth form is well supported by the two deputy heads. The school's management arrangements have allowed the head of sixth form considerable autonomy and encouraged her to be innovative. As a result, the monitoring of standards, setting of targets, provision for guidance and the availability of careers advice are generally coherent, effective and efficient.

99. Roles, policies and responsibilities are defined clearly The head of sixth form knows individual sixth form students very well, is approachable and sets an excellent example in her teaching, section meetings and in the management of her tutors. She is well supported by the assistant head of the sixth form who ensures that students' needs are well met. The very good teamwork of the head of sixth form, her deputy and tutors ensures that the various leadership and management functions are well integrated and that students in the sixth form act as role models for younger pupils.
100. Monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the sixth form are good. There is a sharp focus on reviewing and improving examination success. Annual examination performance provides a strong focus for audit and review. Early in the academic year each head of department reports directly to the headteacher and his deputy on the results achieved in the summer examinations. Most heads of subject departments are very well focused on the quality of work in their areas and on developing the best strategies for improving the quality of teaching and for raising attainment even further.
101. Performance management has ensured effective monitoring of sixth form teachers by heads of most departments under the supervision of their line managers. The individual performances of students are tracked back to teachers and also compared with other subjects. The best departments, for example biology, French, physics, religious studies and sociology, have been effective in generating ideas, enthusiasm and support for staff. They are scrutinising pupils' work, analysing National Curriculum tests and GCSE performance and raising the level of discussion and action. The quality of curricular planning has improved and departmental schemes of work provide an effective framework for learning. In others, some weaknesses persist. There are inconsistent approaches to assessment and to the challenge of high attaining pupils. Subject plans do not focus sufficiently on precise targets and on value added improvement.
102. The school provides its sixth form students with very good opportunities to exercise leadership, show initiative and set a positive example and tone. A sixth form committee acts responsibly taking decisions about the running of the sixth form common room. The prefects play a major role in the running of the school life. The head boy and head girl think highly of their school, and their roles within it, participating actively in supporting many school functions and activities. In addition a challenging range of responsibilities is offered to students, for example, through the Buddy teams and form friends. Students' contributions and views are valued by the senior management team and staff.
103. Governors are very supportive of the sixth form and help in many ways to ensure it retains its ethos and its commitment to quality. Through its curriculum and personnel committees, it monitors very well both provision and performance. The governing body is well informed of the performance of the sixth form. It does not however meet the statutory requirements in respect of a daily act of collective worship but it fulfils carefully all other responsibilities towards the sixth form. Governors are included in the process of annual review and formulation of targets. They are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of individual departments and are ready to intervene when appropriate. The site and buildings committee is alert to accommodation issues. The governors have supported very well the strategic development and best interests of the school's sixth form.

## **Resources**

104. Sixth form provision is very cost effective. Financial planning is good. Costs for the sixth form are linked appropriately with the priority areas identified in the school development plan. Targets for development are costed fully, with account taken of time and professional development commitments, as well as strictly financial implications. The school applies effectively the principles of best value whenever possible and a number of governors have extensive expertise and experience. This experience is put to good use in the awarding of contracts for building and other capital works. Teachers are very well qualified and deployed suitably to teach sixth form courses. Arrangements for professional development are very good and extensive opportunities are provided for teachers to update their skills.
105. Students are well supported by the quality and breadth of learning resources available and the accommodation which offers a welcoming learning environment. Students have adequate accommodation including an area for private study and a social area. There is an adequate

number of teaching and specialist rooms, but this is achieved within some constraints. With an increase in the school's population the provision of specialist teaching areas remains a problem. Some subjects such as business studies, design and technology, physical education, physics, geography, physical education and modern foreign languages and religious studies suffer from their specialist rooms: for instance being too small or too spread out to facilitate imaginative teaching, good communication and management of shared resources.

106. Within the school's budget, funds are allocated equitably according to a known formula. Resources for learning are sufficient, easily accessible to staff and students and used efficiently to meet the demands of the sixth form courses. However, the learning resources for mathematics and design and technology remain inadequate. In English and mathematics, individual research and learning opportunities are hampered by a too narrow range of resources and a shortage of books. ICT provision has improved but is still below what is expected nationally. Library resources are satisfactory for sixth form study. Taking into account the prior attainment of students, unit costs, standards of achievement and the good quality of much of the teaching observed, the sixth form is judged to give very good value for money.

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

In the inspection, 13 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
Art	13	100		38.5		3.15	
Biology	28	100		53.5		3.50	
Business Studies	16	100		43.8		3.56	
CDT	24	91.6		16.7		2.25	
Chemistry	20	100		55		3.25	
Computer Studies	12	100		16.7		2.42	
English	52	100		80.8		4.21	
Food Technology	6	100		33.3		3.33	
French	11	100		45.45		3.36	
German	13	92.3		30.8		2.46	
Geography	20	100		60.0		3.85	
General Studies	131	98.47		27.5		2.84	
History of Art	1	100		0.0		3.00	
History	34	100		58.8		3.59	
Media Studies	30	100		66.67		3.73	
Mathematics	25	92		52.0		3.12	
Music	5	100		20		3.20	
Physical Education	15	100		66.67		3.80	
Physics	25	92		48.0		3.36	
Politics	15	100		73.3		3.93	
Psychology	39	100		71.8		4.03	
Religious studies	23	100		56.5		3.35	
Russian	1	100		100		5.0	
Sociology	19	94.7		73.7		3.84	
Theatre Studies	9	100		88.9		4.44	

### **GCE A level and AVCE courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	11	100	96.0	54.5	46.0	6.91	6.57
Biology	29	93.1	88	72.4	34	7.59	5.25
Business Studies	8	100	92.0	50.0	32.0	6.75	5.50
Design and technology	15	100	91.0	33	30.0	6.40	5.38
Chemistry	23	100	90	43.5	43	6.17	5.90
Media studies	24	100	93	54	31	7.17	5.53
Computer Studies	15	86.67	86.0	33.3	23.0	4.93	4.62
English	47	100	95.0	63.8	37.0	7.79	5.91
French	7	100	89	100	38	9.14	5.90
German	8	100	91	37.5	91	6.75	5.81
Geography	21	100	92	42.85	38	7.05	5.74
General Studies	111	100	85	40.5	30	6.29	4.91
History	22	95.45	88	40.9	35	6.00	5.45
Mathematics	20	85.0	87.0	35	43	5.70	5.80
Music	4	100	93	75.0	35	8.00	5.0
Physics	14	100	92	64.28	40	8.14	5.67
Other Social Studies	43	93	87	40	34	6.23	5.30
Psychology	29	100		48.27		6.34	
Religious studies	8	100	92	88.0	38	8.75	5.84
Sociology	13	100		85		8.15	5.32
Sports Studies	9	100	92	11.1	25	4.67	5.09

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### Mathematics

Provision for mathematics is **good**. The inspection covered the AS-level and A-level courses offered by the school including modules in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Formal teaching of application of number leading to the key skills qualification does not take place.

##### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Pupils work well together and with their teachers.
- There is a good match of teachers to the needs of the mathematics department.

##### Areas for improvement

- The number of students achieving higher grades (A-B) at A-level.
- The use of information and communication technology as a support for learning.
- The assessment of students' work.
- Lack of appropriate textbooks.

107. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were in line with those of all other schools nationally and girls' results were better than those of boys. However, they were well below those achieved in other selective schools. A-level results were similar to those achieved in 2000 and slightly below those in 1999. The large majority of students who took the examination gained a pass grade but the proportion gaining higher grades, A and B, was below average when compared with other schools. In relation to their GCSE results, they performed as well as expected. The 2001 AS-level results indicate an improvement, with an improved number of students achieving higher grades A-B. As a result of their AS-level results most students continued their studies of mathematics into Year 13 with only a few deciding not to continue further.
108. Standards of work seen in lessons and students' folders are good and students' achievement in the sixth form is good in relation to their GCSE results. Teaching demands a brisk pace of work and much material is covered in lessons with students embarking on further work on problem solving. They display a range of secure knowledge throughout the mathematics syllabus and can relate and apply the work of one area of the syllabus to another. Their algebraic skills are used effectively in calculus and students can differentiate and integrate a wide range of functions efficiently. In one mechanics lesson observed, students used previous knowledge of approximating areas under a curve and of differential and integral calculus in solving problems relating to distance, velocity and acceleration. Their statistical skills are well developed and students can analyse complex data, drawing relevant conclusions. Students' understanding of mean, variance, probability and cumulative distributions was good and they were able to solve complex problems involving the exponential functions. Most students recall knowledge very well. Written work is well presented on the whole and matches the confidence which students display in the classroom.
109. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course. Nevertheless higher attaining students are achieving well. They show, for example, good knowledge and understanding of logarithmic functions. Most have developed considerable confidence in tackling calculations, for example, in differential calculus and are successfully moving on from GCSE work into new areas of mathematics. Written work is well developed and students are making good progress in developing their skills of independent research. Lower attainers, however, have greater difficulty in applying the concepts learned in GCSE algebra to, for example, calculus, resulting in slower progress and reduced confidence.
110. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. The principal features of teaching are the use of good subject knowledge by teachers, well-focused planning and, in many lessons, a range of methods which maintain interest and engender learning. In a lesson on Newton's Laws, for example, the teacher used very good subject knowledge to challenge students to think and apply previous knowledge to new situations. In some lessons, however, there is insufficient opportunity

for students to work independently. Homework is set which extends class work and often takes the form of structured questions. Assessment is used well to monitor the progress of students, to identify underachievers and adjust teaching accordingly. Day-to-day marking, whilst being thorough, does not always indicate how students can improve, neither does it provide any targets for future work.

111. Students learn well. They respond well to challenge, work hard and show interest in their work. They support and help each other and enter into mature discussion as part of their learning. They undertake independent work maturely. Most can extract information and make their own notes on, for example, logarithms.
112. Leadership and management in the mathematics department are good overall. There is a commitment to building on what has been achieved already and to improving standards. A new scheme of work, reflecting new subject requirements, provides a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics and identifies a range of approaches to encourage effective learning. A good range of learning support materials is being developed, but a lack of appropriate text books for Year 13 students and insufficient graphical calculators has a negative impact upon opportunities for independent learning. In addition, more attention needs to be given to the use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool. Target setting, based on an analysis of students' performance in tests, is in place and used effectively to provide learning goals. Nevertheless, greater emphasis needs to be placed on the provision of an appropriate conversion course to ensure that all students can apply their learning at GCSE to the rigours of advanced level work.

## Biology

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **very good**.

### Strengths

- The exceptionally high results at A-level in 2001, including more than twice the national average gaining grades A and B
- Results in the AS examination in 2001.
- The dramatic improvement since the last inspection.
- Very good teaching.
- The management and leadership of the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- The contributions made by some students in lessons.
- To provide greater awareness of the spiritual and cultural aspects of the subject.
- Graphical skills and interpretation of results.

113. The GCE A-level results in 2001 showed attainment to be very high. The percentage gaining grades A and B was very high at more than twice the national figure. The average points score was also well above the national average. These results are well above the national figures for grammar schools. There has been an almost consistent rise in attainment levels each year since the last inspection in 1997. In relation to their GCSE results the students have made very good progress.
114. The standards of work seen in Year 13, in lessons and in samples of written work, are well above course expectations. Students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. Knowledge and understanding are being developed to a high level through some very effective teaching. In lessons on homeostasis, basic knowledge from GCSE was quickly developed into knowledge and understanding of the varied and complex mechanisms that control body temperature. This was achieved through a well-structured, logical and precise series of questions, backed with support materials that took the students step-by-step to the new concept or idea. Students were expected to answer questions fully and accurately. Only when the teacher was confident that the concept had been grasped was a class moved on. The coursework seen ranged from below average attainment to some very high attainment levels. Examples of the latter were seen in work on the relationship between the population of freshwater shrimps in a local river and concentration levels of oxygen and in a study of leaf thickness in relation to location. Overall the strengths lie in planning, handling variables and implementation of

the practical work but there are some evident weaknesses in interpreting results and in graphical representation.

115. Students in Year 12 are achieving standards above the expectations of the course overall. The evidence was stronger from the written work seen than from performances in lessons. In a lesson where students gave presentations on various aspects of gene technology it was evident that a lot of valuable research had been done by each student and been of great benefit to the individual but as a collective learning experience in class the progress made was limited. Oral skills in questioning and explaining ideas were mostly below expectations. Coursework on social, environmental and health issues is at a high level of attainment. ICT is used widely to good effect. Skills in planning experimental work with respect to variables are above average. Graphical techniques and interpretation of results are generally below expected levels of attainment.
116. The quality of teaching overall is very good. Of the five lessons observed, three were very good and two were judged to be satisfactory. Outside the classroom the high quality of ongoing assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress to promote higher attainment add to the effectiveness of the teaching. The high quality teaching is characterised by the very good subject knowledge, the setting of clear goals, high expectations, many aspects of the lesson planning, the very effective use of homework to enhance learning and the productive use of resources, including ICT. A particularly strong feature is the use of questions in a well-structured sequence that leads students to a clearer understanding of new concepts. The teaching could be improved further if all lesson plans included the specific learning objectives to be reached and an indication of the timing of each phase of the lesson. On occasions there is insufficient time left for a comprehensive review of the key concepts from the lesson.
117. Over time the large majority of students acquire skills, knowledge and understanding, which they apply very effectively in written work and tests. They find the test essay programme particularly valuable in improving their knowledge and understanding of topics. Their productivity is good. They are well motivated, co-operative and interested in the subject but they often adopt an attitude of passive receivers of information in lessons and avoid engaging the teacher in their learning processes. There are good opportunities for independent learning through the research work undertaken in coursework, projects, field trips and in preparing essays. Students show competent mathematical skills in handling formulae and calculations associated with the subject.
118. The very high standards achieved result from the subject being very well led and managed. There is a strong determination to maintain high standards. The development plans and schemes of work support this. Since the last inspection, assessment and monitoring procedures have become much more effective in promoting rises in attainment levels, there is a better induction programme for Year 12 students and the use and quality of ICT have increased considerably. The schemes of work lack clear indications as to where spiritual and cultural aspects could be better exploited.

## Chemistry

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is **good**.

### Strengths

- A very marked improvement in A-level results in 2001 in comparison with those of 2000.
- Results in the AS examinations in 2001.
- Good teaching.
- Good opportunities for problem-solving.
- The leadership of the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- Use of monitoring and analysis data to provide positive targets for under-achieving students.
- The monitoring and review of curriculum planning and teaching and learning strategies.
- More opportunities for spiritual and cultural development.
- The contributions made by some students in lessons.

119. The GCE A-level results in 2001 showed a very significant improvement over those of 2000, with attainment, in relation to grades A – E gained, moving from well below average to being in line with the national average. At the higher grades, A and B, performance is in line with the national average but below that of similar schools. In terms of average points gained attainment is above the national average. In relation to GCSE results the cohort has made good progress. A comparison of average points scored by girls and boys shows the boys' attainment to be significantly lower than that of the girls.
120. The standards of work of the current students are above national expectations for their ages. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In lessons seen, most students were clearly making advances in their knowledge and understanding as a result of effective teaching. The teachers were in command of the material being taught and confidently took the classes through a sequence of instructions, questioning and applications to improve their learning. This was evident, for example, in a lesson on complex ions and ligands where students were using high order skills to forecast formulae and structures from the theory taught. These concepts were then consolidated successfully by being applied to the construction of models of some of the complex structures. The coursework seen shows that students can apply their knowledge and understanding to solve problems. There are numerous examples of very high quality work involving independent research. The planning, implementation, analysis of results and evaluation involved in such work are all well above average levels.
121. In Year 12 students are also achieving well in relation to earlier attainment and standards of work are above national expectations. The students find the transition from GCSE chemistry to A-level difficult. They find the conceptual levels to be much higher and that there is a lot of material to be covered. Nonetheless good progress is being made. In a lesson on redox reactions the teacher built successfully on existing GCSE knowledge to develop the students' understanding of oxidation and reduction to writing half-equations to represent oxidation-reduction processes.
122. The teaching is good and the students learn well as a result. Of the five lessons seen, four were judged to be good and one satisfactory. The strengths noted in the teaching were the high expectations, aspects of the planning, the setting of homework that consolidates learning and the use of well structured and targeted questions that make demands on the students. Whilst the planning clearly indicates the activities and material to be covered, the timing and pace of the lessons are not always appropriate. In some instances the delivery is too fast, with insufficient time available for students to reflect, consolidate and absorb the concepts being taught. This is aggravated when no time is left for a summary of key points at the end of the lesson. Specific learning objectives should be included in the planning.
123. Most students learn well over time. Written work, tests and examinations results show that the majority are able to recall and apply knowledge successfully. Students are well motivated, diligent and co-operative but too many are content to be passive recipients of the teaching, particularly in Year 12, and do not engage sufficiently in their own learning. There are good opportunities for independent learning through coursework. Students are confident in using textbooks and ICT and can extract relevant material to support their research projects. They use ICT also to present their work most effectively. Above average skills in mathematics enable students to carry out successfully the calculations, extensively used in many areas of the subject.
124. Leadership is good and the subject is managed satisfactorily. There is a clear commitment and determination to raise standards as the first priority. An appropriate development plan has been drawn up and schemes of work are in place. Procedures for recording and analysing assessment data have improved considerably since the last inspection and provide a valuable tool for monitoring students' progress. More effective use could be made of the data to set targets and develop strategies to improve the attainment levels of those who are under-achieving. The data would also be useful in a more structured and formal review of teaching strategies and curriculum planning outcomes. The scheme of work should be reviewed to highlight opportunities to develop the spiritual and cultural aspects of the subject. The quality of ICT has been much improved since the last inspection and good use of it is now being made in both teaching and administration.

## Physics

Overall, the quality of provision in physics is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Very high standards in A-level examination results.
- Excellent management and leadership of the subject.
- Very good teaching.
- Development of students' learning skills.
- Marking and assessment help students understand what they have to do to improve.

### Areas for improvement

- Additional resources could further improve the learning opportunities for students.

125. The A-level examination results in 2001 were very high with 100 per cent of students achieving a pass and 64 per cent achieving a higher grade of A or B. These results are very high in comparison with national average. Results for AS and A-level physics in 2001 were excellent. For the last four years A-level results have been consistently above the national average and therefore show a considerable improvement since the last inspection. 2001 results compare favourably with average results for all Kent grammar schools and other subjects in the same school. There is no significant difference between the results of boys and girls.
126. Analysis of work, observation during lessons and discussions with the students show that their achievement is good in both Years 12 and 13. A high proportion has gained good grades in GCSE science but the progress made represents a good achievement. Year 12 students are achieving well early in the AS-level course, meeting the high expectations set by their teachers. Effective teaching challenges all students and as a result they make very good progress. Students demonstrate very good grasp of concepts such as measurement of light intensity at various distances. Achievement was particularly high because the teacher introduced the work, in such a way that students were challenged to consolidate previous understanding by applying it in a new situation. The standard of students' work in Year 13 is well above average. The students' folders show very good understanding of work taught earlier in the course. Gifted and talented students are identified and given every encouragement to achieve the highest grades. Specific essay work is set to encourage the development of literacy skills. Numeracy is developed to a high level as students use very large and very small numbers in their calculations. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is used effectively by teachers and students.
127. Physics teaching is very good and at times excellent. The teachers' high level of subject knowledge and understanding, excellent organisation and high expectations ensure that students learn very well, acquiring and consolidating new knowledge and skills. Teachers and technicians are very well organised. There are good opportunities to plan and design experiments and test hypotheses. Consequently students' investigational skills are well developed. Effective teaching methods contribute significantly to students' progress so that there is an appropriate and interesting balance of theory and practical work. Recent developments such as cold fusion are brought to the notice of the students. Students are challenged in each lesson and by the regular setting of homework. The regular completion of the homework is a key feature that provides very good progress. Relationships are very good and have appropriate formality. Teachers recognise that the mathematics content of the course is challenging to the students, particularly if A-level mathematics is not being studied at the same time. The required mathematics and the extra mathematics included for high attaining students therefore clearly identified during lessons. Frequent, feedback by the teachers encourages students to keep up-to-date with their work. Time, support staff and resources are very well used. The basic skills are well planned and addressed.
128. All students have positive attitudes to the subject. They respond well to questions and show respect for their teachers. Initiative is developed and good working habits are strongly encouraged. Examples of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are evident in the teaching. The number of students wishing to study physics in the sixth-form is increasing.

129. The combination of AS and A-level physics courses provides very effectively for the needs of these students. Imaginative teaching is used to enable students to understand the properties of subatomic particles. An important feature of the assessment procedure is the regularity of marking. The results of tests are analysed thoroughly. Students are confident that their homework will be assessed and are therefore encouraged to hand it in on time. A considerable amount of information is fed back to students so that they are clear about their progress. The information is recorded in a spreadsheet and compared with earlier attainment results so that the performance of each student can rapidly be displayed. This information very effectively guides future planning. The students are very satisfied with their range of experiences in physics.
130. Departmental leadership is excellent. There is a high quality of organisation, documentation, assessment and monitoring of the subject performance. The documentation is very detailed and provides a clear plan for all aspects of the teaching. Targets are identified, action is taken and progress is measured by careful analysis of results. Teaching is appraised and co-ordinated. Professional development is undertaken at regular intervals by all staff. In addition, students' views are recorded by means of anonymous questionnaires and actions taken where possible.
131. The physics staff are well qualified and provide very effective teaching of the subject. The technician support is very good. Accommodation is satisfactory for the present size of classes but will not be large enough if student numbers continue to increase as they have done recently. Departmental funding is good but there is a continuous need for updating of computer resources to enable students to keep up to date with sensing and analysis of data. A laptop computer and projector, gained as the result of a competition for 'Excellence in science teaching' are used very effectively across the science department. Students make good use of textbooks.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

### Design and technology

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**. The focus of the inspection was design and technology, but food technology was also sampled. Highly effective teaching, clear explanations and efficient use of resources resulted in very good learning in food technology. Year 13 students demonstrated very good understanding of the manufacture of crisps and cholesterol levels in food.

#### Strengths

- The quality and range of learning experiences.
- Good teaching.
- A good data recording system to monitor students' progress.

#### Areas for improvement

- The frequency of the marking and evaluation of students' work.
- Ensuring that aspects of health and safety are addressed thoroughly.
- The accommodation and learning resources.

132. A-level results for product design, resistant materials, have been above the national average over the last four years except for 1999 when they were below average. The results for 2001 are in line with the average for all Kent grammar schools. This is an improvement since the last inspection when results were in line with all maintained schools. The results for product design, graphical applications, have declined over the four year period so that for the year 2000 they were well below average.
133. Analysis of students' coursework shows that students' achievement is good. High attaining students are given extra encouragement so that they make particularly good progress. Their project work includes all stages of the design process and varied and imaginative methods to communicate their ideas. Students of more average attainment work hard to try to grasp the concepts but their projects have often unfinished pages and lack significant detail. Information and communication technology (ICT) is well used by most students to improve the presentation of coursework.

134. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. This includes background scientific knowledge enabling important principles to be explained clearly. The resources are well used so that students gain experience of a wide variety of manufacturing techniques. Students are stimulated by the challenges presented so that they are sometimes able to design and make unique products. Lessons are well planned and students are often able to work on designs and manufacturing in the same lesson. The use of ICT is encouraged to improve presentation to reach a professional level in many cases. Feedback to students is very effective and is given during lessons as designs are being developed. Environmental considerations are addressed as students design products and use materials. Similarly, the social consequences of manufacturing some products are given prominence.
135. Students acquire skills, knowledge and understanding of processes through a wide variety of teaching strategies. Creative effort is evident and most students take pride in the development of their ideas and products. Students know how they are progressing by regular contact with the teacher on a one-to-one basis.
136. Most students choose their design and technology A-level course because they wish to gain a higher qualification for career purposes. Their attitudes are very good. A minority have chosen the subject for other reasons and are less reliable when needing to complete coursework. However all were very busy during lessons using a wide variety of materials. About half of the original Year 12 class are now continuing the subject in Year 13.
137. The A-level design and technology courses with graphics and resistant materials are an appropriate subject for students wishing to specialise in design, manufacturing or engineering work. This includes a study of electronics where in one lesson, students were learning about capacitors and how they can be used. An IT design package is used frequently. The students have a wide variety of previous design and technology experiences so that some start the course with little previous knowledge in this subject area. This causes some initial teaching and learning difficulties. The department has very good links with local industries. The high attaining students are encouraged by becoming involved in an engineering education scheme promoted by a local firm. The specialist rooms are well used between lessons and after school 'catch up' sessions are offered.
138. Records of student progress are maintained on a Microsoft access database. This provides information on student progress by comparing it with previous attainment data. It would be possible to record more data and provide further analysis of individual achievement by this means. Most feedback to students is provided verbally as design work progresses.
139. The teaching of the design and technology courses is well organised so that students have every opportunity to gain higher grades. Financial management is sound and occasionally the department is able to supplement the supply of materials through industrial contacts. ICT is well used by the students for coursework but more computers are needed to enable the more varied use of software within the departments. Risk assessment is undertaken but some issues raised have not been addressed satisfactorily. Schemes of work are very detailed and include regular examination standard tests. Reports to parents are well structured.
140. Staff are well qualified to teach effectively product design and graphics with the resistance materials component. The accommodation is satisfactory but needs refurbishment. Resources are barely adequate for sixth-form teaching. In particular computer controlled manufacturing equipment is insufficient to support teaching and learning.

## Business Education

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

### Strengths

- 2001 exam results were above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are good. Students apply what they have learned to case studies, actual organisations and the real economy.
- The department is well managed.

#### Areas for improvement

- The setting of short term targets to maximise achievement and improve attainment.
- The appointment of an additional business education teacher on the AS/A2 course to ease the load on the head of department.

141. GCE A level examination results have improved significantly over the five years since the last inspection, when they were roughly in line with national averages. Girls out-performed boys in the 3 years to 2000 but boys did better than girls in 2001 when overall results were above the national average. In 2001 the standards reached at AS level were good. All 16 students who entered for business studies passed and 5 attained the top A grade. 13 of these students have continued their studies onto the A2 (A-level) course.
142. Year 12 students are attaining standards that are above national averages. They have a clear understanding of business concepts and can apply what they know to case studies and the real economy. The majority have a good knowledge and understanding of economic theory. They can carry out research effectively and have sufficiently developed higher order skills of evaluation and analysis to write a conclusion that is justified. They have a good knowledge of topical issues which their wide choice of individual coursework reflects. This ranges, for instance, from an analysis of Hertzberg's job motivators compared with money as a motivator in the early twenty first century, to an enquiry as to whether Marks and Spencer can regain their market leadership. They have a good command of the key skills of communication, use of number and ICT. Many have not studied a business course before and all have made good progress since September.
143. The standards achieved by current Year 13 students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are also very good and reflect their AS results. One high attaining girl is reaching excellent standards. Students have developed an understanding of relevant economic and business concepts and theories and can apply them to a range of real world issues. They have acquired knowledge about economics and business which allows them to analyse, explain and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a market economy. They have developed very good enquiry and research skills and can use the Internet competently to investigate the business world. Students also make regular use of the local business community as a resource as was seen in several pieces of coursework, for example an enquiry as to whether Woolworths has a future in Thanet after the opening of Tesco and an investigation into the effect upon local pharmacies. Achievement in terms of prior attainment is satisfactory overall.
144. The quality of teaching and learning is good. A high level of subject expertise is used to provide stimulating and direct teaching often through skilful questioning as well as explanation. Students are challenged appropriately with well focused activities as was seen in a Year 12 lesson where students used economic indicators to describe the business cycle in the UK between 1987 and 1998. Students' work is assessed on a regular basis with some detailed and helpful comments designed to indicate how students might improve. Individual students feel well supported, particularly with their portfolio work, and their progress is well monitored. However, more could be done, by setting short term, achievable targets, to ensure that all students reach their full potential.
145. The department is well managed. Documentation is clear and schemes of work have been revised and developed appropriately for the new courses. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection and all matters raised then have been tackled successfully. Business studies is growing in popularity and there is a need to bring in another teacher to share the load of A-level teaching undertaken by the head of department.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

### Computer Studies

Overall, the quality of provision in computer studies is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- The progress made by high attaining students.

- Procedure for assessing pupils' attainment and progress.

#### Areas for improvement

- The variety of teaching strategies.
- Learning resources.
- The overall provision of ICT for the sixth-form.

146. Although A-level results are good, higher achievement could be expected with a greater variety of teaching strategies. A-level computer studies results have been above the national average over the last four years except for the year 2000 when they fell below. These results are an improvement on the results reported at the time of the last inspection when they were just below national expectations. However the A-level results have been below the average for Kent grammar schools for the last two years. AS level results for 2001 are also below the national average.
147. Observation of students' coursework, discussions during lessons and listening to students' answers to questions show that their achievement is good in the sixth form although AS coursework is clearly less well developed. The development of a database as a major coursework project is above average. Higher attaining students are given encouragement to gain the highest possible grades. Girls complete their coursework assignments more conscientiously than boys.
148. Teaching is at least sound and is sometimes good. The teacher has adequate knowledge to teach computer studies and sometimes employs useful visual aids such as a box with shelves to explain a method of storing information. Planning is satisfactory although some opportunities to create interest by showing computer parts or demonstrating effects are missed. Planning could usefully include details of the time to be spent on each section of the lessons. Expectations are appropriate but some theory lessons need more variation to maximise learning. Specific examples of programming statements could be introduced, demonstrated and tested. Textbooks are available and are used as source material in school and at home. Some high attaining students think that more could be done to encourage coursework deadlines to be met.
149. Students gain their computing knowledge from some well-structured explanations from the teacher and by using the textbook. Learning skills are also developed through the production of coursework. This is well organised in most cases and provides opportunities for students to create their own unique designs for database structures. Attitudes to the study of the subject are very good. Many students have chosen the subject as a deliberate career choice and are therefore keen to succeed. Many show their interest and knowledge by asking and answering questions.
150. AS and A-level computer science is available for sixth-form students who wish to develop their knowledge and gain a qualification in an information and communication technology (ICT) subject. Entry requirements for the course are flexible due to the wide variation in background experiences. No other courses are available although it is planned to introduce a key skills ICT course. Most sixth-form students do not therefore continue to develop their skills formally except where ICT is required as part of the work in another subject.
151. Homework is set and marked regularly, using the examination board marking schemes. Coursework projects are marked with helpful comments for improvement. More detailed feedback is provided by discussion with each student on a one-to-one basis. Students' knowledge and understanding of the subject is tested frequently and they receive useful feedback.
152. The work of the department is well organised and schemes of work provide adequate guidance for teaching the AS and A-level syllabuses. The effectiveness of the sixth-form ICT provision is under review. The accommodation allows the sixth-form classes to be taught effectively. The sixth form make good use of the available computers. Learning resources are satisfactory but need more modern equipment to enhance teaching and learning. Sixth form ICT is taught by one teacher who is well qualified to teach the computing course at A-level. The number of courses available to the sixth form will be increased when a planned new appointment is made.

## Physical education

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Excellent teaching leads to very good learning.
- Students respond very well to the work and enjoy their studies.

Areas for improvement

- Explore the possibility of introducing the Community Leadership Award.
- Students need more opportunities for their own learning.

153. In 2001 fifteen students took the AS examination and all gained A-E grades, with the number gaining the higher grades A-B being significantly higher than that gained nationally. Most students gained higher grades in this examination than they did in their other examinations. At A-level, all students gained pass grades A-E, but the number gaining the higher grades A and B was below the national average and below the average for selective schools. Four of the students who took this examination went on to study sports science at university. Although there were more boys than girls taking the examination there was no significant difference in their levels of attainment.
154. The standards of achievement of the current Year 13 students (who were successful in the school's AS examination) are very good and well above that expected nationally. Male and female students do equally well. Work folders are organised meticulously and show that the demands of the A2 syllabus are being fully met. Students write at length on a variety of topics such as drug abuse in sport, the effect of sponsorship and women in sport. Students are able to ask quite perceptive questions of their teachers using appropriate technical language. They are articulate and can convey their views very effectively. Speaking and listening skills are good. Most display a range of good discussion skills as they discuss, argue and defend their viewpoints. They evaluate each other's response and make perceptive comments partly to get a reaction as well as to debate their views. Students were observed taking part in a debate on the role of the media in sport. Clear views were expressed vigorously, challenged and defended, although students were very tolerant of each other's views and opinions. Some students have used the Internet to broaden their knowledge, and to research individual topics.
155. All students in Year 12 have made good progress since they started the course in September 2001 and are achieving well. In lessons, students work conscientiously, are attentive and concentrate well. They show real rapport with their teacher and relationships when working in groups are very good. However students do rely heavily on their teacher who works hard for them, and in some lessons students do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning. In discussions all students make effective use of a wide range of relevant vocabulary.
156. Students learn very well as the result of the excellent teaching. Enthusiasm for the subject and wide subject knowledge enable staff to interest and motivate the students. The teacher is aware of the different ways in which her students learn and she works hard to use methods, and to provide them with resources, that meet their needs. A particularly impressive feature is the importance that the teacher places on a continuity of approach from Year 11 to Year 13. She knows that the change to sixth form study can be difficult for some students, and therefore attempts to ease them into research and further reading. The expectation of what students can do is high, and they respond with high levels of industry and a mature approach to their studies. The teacher passes on her considerable expertise and challenges students to think intellectually. She contributes to the students' learning by giving them, and pointing them towards, a wealth of background information and resources. Lessons proceed at a good pace. Their work is marked consistently so that they know how to improve their attainments. In addition to having impressive knowledge the teacher has a very good relationship with her students and treats them as responsible adults. As part of the A-level course a group of the students will be visiting the Commonwealth Games in Manchester.
157. Good knowledge and management are reflected in the obvious enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and sixth form students. The subject is very well managed and clear policies, which are set out in the departmental handbook, help in the effective delivery of the subject.
158. Sixth form students who are not taking an examination in physical education have a time-tabled opportunity to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities. Sixth form matches against other schools are held regularly, and a number of students help in the coaching of younger members of the school. The department should now investigate the possibility of giving some students the opportunity to take the Community Sports Leader Award.



## HUMANITIES

The focus was history, religious studies and sociology.

### History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

#### Strengths

- Results in history are consistently above the national average.
- The teaching of history is good: subject knowledge is very good and reflected in the planning of lessons and range of activities.
- Students acquire a good depth of knowledge.

#### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for using ICT are not yet developed fully.

159. Students' performance in A level examinations has been consistently above the national average for A-B grades for the past three years. The proportion of A – E grades has similarly been above, except in 2000 when it was average. The points score confirms this pattern. When compared with other grammar schools, both percentage results and points score are below average, particularly in the higher grades. The comparison of the attainment of boys and girls shows a variable picture. Girls' results were higher in 2001 but the reverse was the case in 2000. Standards were similar at the time of the last inspection. All Year 12 pupils who sat the 2001 AS examination achieved an A – E grade and nearly half obtained an A-B grade. All students who began the course completed it with the exception of one student who left the school.
160. The observation of lessons and the scrutiny of samples of students' work broadly confirm these standards. At this stage, the achievement of students in Year 12 is in line with prior attainment. In Year 13, students' achievement is good and again reflects the standards achieved in AS level.
161. The major strength of the students' learning is their depth of historical knowledge. Their essay skills are well developed, particularly in terms of organising material. Therefore they produce at least detailed relevant accounts, and many are able to analyse a wide range of factors. High attaining students have mature skills of analysing and evaluating key issues. Year 12 students preparing coursework essays on Ireland 1906-1914, responded intelligently to the challenging teaching and demonstrated well above average research skills, made good use of evidence and evaluated critically facts, sources and relevant historical evidence. Year 12 work shows that lower attaining students are having some difficulty in linking ideas together and using evidence to the full.
162. The personal investigations of Year 13 students show their ability to carry out independent research on topics as disparate as the Peninsular War and the roles of Al Capone and gangsters in Chicago. Students respond readily to questioning in class, giving detailed and thoughtful responses. In one prepared debate on Hitler's foreign policy from 1933-39, students showed a capacity to present complex material clearly and to pick up weaknesses in evidence and argument. Almost all could have strengthened their presentations by including all the evidence they had. Students are able to make clear notes, useful for later revision. They are sufficiently numerate to draw evidence from graphs and statistical tables. Their usage of ICT is confined to word processing and research; these skills need further development.
163. Overall the quality of teaching is good with some very good features. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and the demands of examinations. They plan activities which, from the very beginning of the topic, force the students to adopt a certain position and defend it. For example, in a Year 12 lesson on Lenin and Stalin, students categorised features as being 'critical' or 'sympathetic', but they had to provide evidence for their choice. Analytical skills are reinforced thereby. Traditional methods of teaching, exposition and note-taking are still used but they are well supplemented by discussion and debate which encourages active participation. Though the students have a wide range of abilities, teachers are aware of the need to challenge all realistically. Students receive extra support if necessary but, where appropriate, are encouraged

to read more widely. Folders of work are checked regularly so that notes and essays are well organised. Essay work is always marked in detail. Grades and guidance are clear and constructive. Regular reports give the progress made in the key areas of factual recall, historical explanation and interpretation, together with examination marks, current achievement and predicted grades. Students assess their own work and effort over the period. Their comments are sensible, mature and realistic about their own attitudes and efforts. In lessons, there is a sense of common purpose between students and teachers that encourages motivation.

164. The department is well managed. The new head of department is beginning to develop a vision for future development and a further raising of standards.

## Religious Studies

Overall, the quality of provision in Religious Studies is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Standards at AS/A2 level are very high.
- Teaching is always good and mostly very good. Pupil management is excellent.
- Departmental management is very good.
- Contributions towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- The setting of detailed and more focused targets against which pupils' progress can be identified and sharing these with students.

165. Attainment in the AS level course in Year 12 is well above the national average. This has been a consistent picture over the last four years. In 2001, all students were successful in gaining a pass grade A-E and 57 per cent of students achieved higher grades A – B. In Year 13, attainment is also well above national averages. In 2001, 87 per cent of students achieved grades A – B. Results have shown an upward trend over the last three years.
166. The observation of students in lessons and analysis of their work confirms that standards achieved by students studying AS and A level courses are very good. In Year 12, students demonstrate a very good understanding of philosophical and religious concepts. Students demonstrated their ability to produce well-structured and balanced arguments. Teachers challenge students to analyse material and form judgments about the views of a number of philosophers. In one lesson, students explored the views of different philosophical arguments about capital punishment. A very good critique of the Utilitarian approach and the retribution theory stated by Kant, demonstrated that students are developing their analytical and evaluative skills. The teacher's very good use of discussion, and high expectations, contributed very well to students' ability to think independently.
167. In Year 13, students demonstrate their ability to use ethical language. Through the teacher's challenging and positive approach, students use their skills of analysis to draw out ideas and to make distinctions between opinions, beliefs and facts. Paired discussion enables students to deepen their learning and respect the views of others. Excellent teacher intervention enables students to challenge the traditional wisdom and expand their understanding of topics such as good and evil. In one lesson, students demonstrated their understanding of the range of views expressed about the word "good" in the writings of A.J.Ayer, Moore and Wittgenstein. Teachers have high expectations of students and, as a consequence, they have equally high expectations of themselves. Students use effectively their ICT skills for research purposes. Greater availability of ICT facilities would enable students to develop this ability and raise standards even further. They achieve extremely well and make very good progress.
168. Overall, students' attitudes to learning are excellent. They behave extremely well; are very well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teachers and students is excellent, and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Pupil behaviour makes an excellent contribution to their achievement and progress.

169. Teaching is at least good and, in many cases, very good. The teaching is of high quality and has a significant impact on students' achievement. Planning is very good, and this assists students to focus on information learnt in previous lessons. In all cases, lesson aims are shared with students. Teachers make very good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of styles which enable students to learn from as well as learn about religion. This assists students to maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Resources are used very well and the use of writing frames for essays and note making enable students to structure essays in an appropriate manner. Teachers manage pupil behaviour exceptionally well, contributing to an excellent climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to good effect in allowing students to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have clear expectations of students and challenge them to succeed which is very effective in contributing to pupil achievement.
170. Assessment of students' work is generally good and very helpful comments are made in exercise books. The procedures provide a good basis for assessing what students know and understand. Assessment informs the teaching and learning cycle and the planning of new work. The department does not set targets that are related to levels of attainment. Consequently, students are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve. This is recognised as an area for development.
171. The curriculum in Years 12 and 13 follows the Edexcel AS/A2 level course. It is a wholly appropriate course in philosophy of religion and moral issues. There are opportunities for all sixth form students to study some religious studies in the general studies course. However, the proportion of time is not adequate to comply fully with the requirements of the Kent LEA agreed syllabus.
172. Religious Education makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students, thus providing opportunities for students to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs. In lessons, the teaching encourages students to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues, and work on the major world religions necessitates discussion about the cultures that support them, so preparing students for life in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society.
173. The department is managed very well with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Students are provided with a very rich diet of religious education. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment. She is supported extremely well by three other specialist staff. Planning and documentation are very good, and policy documents are linked closely with the school's aims. The department monitors the work of students. There are regular formal meetings of the department. They form the basis for the discussion of important issues relating to pupil attainment and progress. The head of department monitors the work of teachers through classroom observations.
174. Accommodation is satisfactory. The quality of displays that celebrates students' achievement is very high. Curriculum resources are generally good, but, in a growing department, these will require updating. The department uses computers to enable all students to learn appropriately, to conduct research and to assist with presentation of material.
175. Since the last inspection, standards have continued to rise. The number of students now taking religious studies at AS/A2 level has risen considerably. The staff profile, including three specialist teachers, has had a significant impact on the progress made by students. Progress has also been made in the use of ICT facilities for research purposes. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## Sociology

Overall, the quality of provision in sociology is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Consistently high A-level results, well above the national average.
- Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

- Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is well planned and reflects the strength of subject knowledge and challenges students appropriately.
- The subject is well managed.

Areas for improvement

- Students' wider reading.
- The development of empirical enquiries.
- Specialist accommodation.

176. Students' performance in GCE A-level examinations over the past 4 years has been consistently high and well above national averages, always, at least, in the top quarter of schools across the country. During these years there have been considerably more female students studying sociology than males. However, in spite of this, boys have done better than girls in 2 of the last 3 years when only 1 boy, in 2000, did not achieve an A or B grade. Students do better in sociology than in their other A level subjects. In 2001 the standards reached at AS level were also very good, with 74 percent of pupils achieving higher grades A – B. Of the 19 students who sat the AS examination, 18 have carried on with the A2 (A level) course.
177. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of samples of students' work confirm that standards are still well above average and achievement is very good in both years of the sixth form. Year 12 students have acquired a good knowledge of specialist vocabulary. They are developing a critical attitude towards sources of evidence and towards social and political issues. They appreciate the significance of theoretical and conceptual issues in sociological debate. They are learning how to design research: to identify, analyse, interpret and evaluate evidence. Essay writing is well developed for all students.
178. Year 13 students have a very good knowledge and a critical understanding of contemporary social processes and structures, specifically in their area of study, e.g. the family, religion and crime and deviance. They know and understand about concepts and theories drawn from different sociological traditions. They use a range of evidence to generate and support discussions about social life. The highest attainers apply a range of knowledge relevant to the question asked and evaluate effectively. They argue clearly, and justify with views and opinions informed by wide reading around the subject. However, most students do not read widely enough, either from sociology journals or from the wide range of sociology books and research available on the Internet. They rely on the support material put together for them by their teachers. In spite of this, however, all students use their knowledge to write evaluative, well argued, essays. Students have very good oral and written communication skills.
179. Teaching and learning are very good. Very good subject knowledge and expertise is used to motivate and inform students. Teachers create a powerful learning ethos by imposing an intellectual rigour which has high expectations of learning outcomes. Lessons are well planned, with support material used as a stimulus and for reference and consolidation. Very good management of classroom discussions, leads to good quality oral analysis by students as was seen in a Year 13 lesson dealing with the Marxist approach to crime and deviance. The relationships between teachers and students are extremely positive and underpin the work of the department. Teachers' marking is thorough and students are given detailed and helpful advice on how to improve their work. Helpful exemplars are designed to develop key communication skills by the structuring of essays for example to focus on the evaluation of evidence. There is clear progression in thinking and in learning. Students respond well to the supportive teaching.
180. The good achievement and very good teaching can be attributed to the fact that the department is well led and managed by a committed and hardworking head of department assisted by a young, recently qualified, sociology teacher. The Head of Department's enthusiasm for sociology is evident as is his commitment to raising standards. The high standards found in the last inspection have been improved upon and exam results are even better than they were then. However, sociologists need to undertake their own individual empirical research to develop fully their skills. This is not done at present and should be considered as the next step for development. Take up rates for the study of sociology in the sixth form have increased considerably in the last year making this one of the largest sixth form departments. In view of this the department needs a permanent base with enough suitable accommodation to ensure that students can be taught in an appropriate learning environment.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- A-level English Literature results in recent years have been consistently above or well above national averages.
- Over the last four years there has been an upward trend in the number of students gaining the highest grades.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students' achievement is very high; they are very good at working together in pairs or larger groups and make significant progress as independent learners.
- Very good teamwork ensures effective monitoring of students' work and progress which enhances their achievements.

#### Areas for improvement

- The department should maintain AS and A-level achievement as a key priority, continuing to focus on the improvement of boys so that they attain grades A and B.
- Accommodation should be reviewed for some teaching groups.

181. Examination results in the A-level English literature examination in each year between 1998 and 2000 were above the national average. In 2001, results achieved were well above the national average. The average points score over the last four years has been consistently higher than the national average. In 2001, the average points score was considerably higher. The percentage of students who gain grades A and B has risen since 1998. In 2001, 65 per cent of students achieved the highest grades, compared with 37 per cent nationally. Female students have consistently and increasingly outperformed their male counterparts in achieving grades A and B over the past four years, although with the exception of 1999, a higher percentage of male students achieved grade A. In the new AS examination taken in 2001, all students gained a pass grade, 80 per cent at grades A - B.

182. Students' achievement is good. Standards of work seen during the inspection, both in lessons and from an examination of students' files are in line with those achieved in examinations. Students' speaking and listening skills are very good, with some exceptional analysis and explanation from the highest attaining students. All students are highly articulate. They develop and express a personal response to literature with confidence. They reason clearly and convincingly, supporting their interpretation with precise textual illustration. The most able students show expertise in adopting the language of literary criticism in their textual analysis. Some year 12 students were quick to identify dramatic irony in a scene they were studying in '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*', whilst members of a Year 13 class discussed confidently the effect of enjambment, juxtaposition and metaphor in their critical appreciation of a variety of poems. Students collaborate very effectively in their exploration of text; any disagreement over interpretation is always presented constructively. Even the quieter students, some of whom find the texts studied within the synoptic unit quite demanding, are able to contribute with confidence to discussion in lessons.

183. Attainment in reading, both in Years 12 and 13, is very good. All students make very good progress in analysing text and considering alternative interpretations. They are confident in their exploration of the use of language, form and tone to convey meaning. The most able students, male and female, volunteer perceptive comparisons between texts in both their oral and written responses. Year 12 students studying Donne's '*Elegy on his Mistress Going to Bed*' made frequent references to other poems, identifying recurring metaphysical themes and images. Students also draw on their wide reading and experience of other subjects such as art and drama when they are working through their analysis. The students' files display an extensive range of extremely detailed, well structured and coherently argued writing. The style is mature and the best essays reveal considerable insight, based on sustained reflection and evaluation of alternative interpretations of texts. In their writing, as in their oral contributions, students confidently express their personal responses. Their arguments are reasoned cogently, supported

by precise textual reference and relevant quotation, although average students tend to sustain their analyses in less depth than that required to achieve the highest grades. Most students are confident and accurate in their use of critical vocabulary in their writing. One class had particularly enjoyed their study of *'Train Spotting'* for the comparative coursework unit and this was reflected in the detail and sensitivity of their writing on this text.

184. Students display very positive attitudes to their work. English literature is an extremely popular choice of subject at AS and A level, particularly with female students. All students approach both oral and written tasks with concentration and perception. They collaborate productively, working at a good pace without drawing hasty conclusions based on insecure understanding of text. During the course, students develop well as independent learners.
185. Teaching is almost always very good. Teachers are well qualified and their obvious enthusiasm and subject knowledge make a significant contribution to students' learning. Lessons are well planned and conducted at a brisk pace. Teachers have high expectations of their students' capabilities. Their wide-ranging choice of texts, which includes much contemporary writing, is intellectually stimulating. Careful grouping of students and allocation of texts for critical analysis ensure that gifted and talented students are challenged consistently. Questioning is carefully structured to guide students through textual interpretation, but also skilfully differentiated to draw the most able to deeper reflection. Questioning in a Year 13 class in which students were discussing their annotation of Rossetti's *'In an Artist's Studio'* steered responses through initial impressions to precise analysis of language and tone. Students are given frequent encouragement to express their personal response to texts and to consider alternative interpretations. The high quality of teaching and positive relationships make a strong contribution to students' progress. Students are made aware of assessment criteria which are consistently applied and moderated in the marking of written work. Their progress is well monitored. Students have a clear idea of the quality of their work and how to improve.
186. The department is well led. Team work is strong. The careful pairing of staff for each sixth form group takes into account different teaching styles. Through regular meetings and the highly effective informal contact between paired staff, collaboration among teachers is very good. Members of the department review their teaching to explore ways of eliciting even better performance from their students. The department provides very good extra-curricular opportunities, including debating, theatre visits and a residential trip to Stratford. Management of resources within the department is good and staff cope well when the size of the classrooms timetabled for English sometimes inhibits lesson activities.

## French

Overall, the quality of provision in French is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Standards of attainment.
- Quality of teaching.
- Assessment procedures that emphasise the needs and progress of all students as individuals.

### Areas for improvement

- Further development of independent use of French by students.
- Recruitment of male students on to post-16 courses.

187. Over the last four years A-level French results have been consistently well above the national average. In 1999 and 2001, results were significantly better than those of other selective schools. In 2001, results were excellent and all seven of the school's candidates gained A or B grades. These results represent an improvement on the findings of the last inspection. In each year from 1998 to 2001 only one of the A-level candidates was male. In the current Year 13 all of the students are female, and in Year 12 all but one are female.
188. The results of the first AS examination in 2001 were below the A-level standards of the preceding years with less than a half of the students gaining A-B grades, but the teachers are now confident that they have a clearer understanding of the standards required by the examination board.

189. Standards in work seen during the inspection are well above expectations in both Year 12 and Year 13. Students exhibit well-developed speaking skills and they speak confidently with good pronunciation on abstract topics such as pollution. They express mature views and sustain a conversation well. They do not let a fear of making errors get in the way of communicating effectively. In general conversation, they react spontaneously to unpredicted questions and demonstrate knowledge of a very good range of relevant vocabulary. In view of this level of proficiency, they could use French more often in their routine classroom transactions with one another and with their teacher. Their understanding of both written and spoken texts is very good. They read texts from a wide range of sources and demonstrate a very good understanding of both gist and detail according to the task set. The highest attaining students reach a high level of accuracy in their written work, showing a very good knowledge of grammatical rules and of a wide range of expressions and structures. In the case of all students, errors occur mainly in their attempts to use complex structures. Coursework is well organised and uses evidence from authentic French sources researched on the Internet as well as from periodicals and magazines. Very good progress is made on all fronts.
190. The quality of teaching is uniformly very good. All teachers have an excellent command of the language. Their confidence in conducting the lessons exclusively in French sets an appropriate challenge to their students. High expectations are reflected in the rigorous correction of errors, which impresses upon students the need for accuracy and encourages them to aim for high standards. The development of students' independence is a strong feature of the teaching of French. Students often have to find out meanings for themselves rather than rely upon the knowledge of their teachers. By helping students to raise their awareness of language patterns and to compare their own language with another, teachers make a valuable contribution to the development of their students' literacy skills.
191. Students work hard. They have excellent attitudes to their work. They are keen to learn and to succeed. Their teachers know them well. As a consequence of assessment procedures which place a great deal of emphasis on students' individual needs and progress, each student is aware of his/her own strengths and weaknesses and of how to improve the level of performance.
192. The leadership and management of French in the sixth form are very good. The head of department and the principal teacher of French are highly respected by their colleagues for quality of the leadership which they offer. Teachers have received appropriate in-service training to prepare them for sixth form teaching. The establishment of links with a school in France and the provision of opportunities for work experience in France support the learning of students. There is a very well thought out scheme of work, including an exceptionally effective scheme to include the valuable work of the foreign language assistant. The transitional stage from GCSE to AS is planned very carefully to cater for students' needs. Effective assessment procedures which focus on students as individuals have a very positive impact on students' work and attitudes.

## OTHER SUBJECTS

193. Students' work was sampled in other A-level subjects such as art, music, media studies, politics, psychology and general studies.
- **Art:** Standards achieved are high in art. Teaching promotes self-critical faculties. Students are confident in their ability to use a variety of materials and analyse their own work critically, explaining clearly the relationship between their own work and the artist whose work has inspired them.
  - **Music:** Individual students demonstrate a good understanding of arpeggiated ornaments in, for example Auric's 'Passport to Pimlico' and of augmented and pentatonic chords in 'blues' music.
  - **Psychology:** Standards are high and provision is very good. Students' achievement is very good. The subject is well taught. Year 13 students showed a good grasp of psychological concepts related to the Yale Model of Communication as a useful approach to analysing communication in health education.
  - **Media Studies:** Teaching is very good. In a Year 12 media studies lesson, students contributed intelligently to discuss contradictions of an edited version of reality TV.

- In **Politics**, Year 12 students discussing suspension of human rights in cases of terrorism, expressed their viewpoints succinctly and justified their opinions based on good grasp of facts and relevant issues.

- **General studies:** Teaching is competent, informative and engaging. Year 13 students were seen investigating, researching and exploring questions concerning beliefs such as atheism, materialism, nationalism and agnosticism. Most students succeed in communicating complex ideas clearly and accurately.