

INSPECTION REPORT

CASTLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Deal

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118825

Headteacher: Mrs Christine Chapman

Reporting inspector: Mrs Barbara O'Brien
13019

Dates of inspection: 14 - 18 January 2002

Inspection number: 199395

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary Modern
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Castle Community School Mill Road Deal Kent
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Appropriate authority:	Local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr H Southorn
Date of previous inspection:	April 2000

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9478	Linda Callaghan	<i>Lay Inspector</i>		How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
21835	Eileen Kelly	<i>Team Member</i>	Design and technology.	
18888	Jan Boulton	<i>Team Member</i>	Physical education; Health and Social Care.	
20767	Jeremy Royle	<i>Team Member</i>	Music.	
10895	David Wasp	<i>Team Member</i>	Equal Opportunities; Religious education.	
24127	James Kidd	<i>Team Member</i>	History.	
13155	John Dixon	<i>Team Member</i>	Modern foreign languages.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
31441	Maggie King	<i>Team Member</i>	Science.	
12885	John Hunt	<i>Team Member</i>	Mathematics.	
8744	Russell Whiteley	<i>Team Member</i>	Art.	
15163	Eric Deeson	<i>Team Member</i>	Information and communication technology; Business studies.	
1723	Michael Milton	<i>Sixth form co-ordinator</i>	Geography.	
8390	Richard Anderson	<i>Team Member</i>	English.	
2512	Brian Emery	<i>Team Member</i>	Special educational needs.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Castle Community School is situated in Deal on the Kent coast. It is a below average size 11 to 18 secondary modern school which has been under-subscribed for a number of years, although first choice numbers have again started to rise. The present roll is 479 of whom 42 students are in Year 12 and above, mainly following vocational courses. The school has a small unit accommodating physically disabled students, who are taught for most of the time in mainstream classes. Post 16 provision is offered in conjunction with South Kent College (Deal) Nearly half of the students (48 per cent) are on the school's register of special educational needs and 28 of these have Statements. The area from which the students come is one of mixed council and private housing where there is much social and economic disadvantage. Nearly one fifth of students take free school meals, which is broadly average. Casual admissions in the last school year numbered 49, the highest intake for any local secondary school. The attainment of students at intake is well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Castle Community School is an effective, inclusive school which has demonstrated significant recent improvement. Standards of attainment are well below national averages overall. On the basis of lessons and work seen during the inspection, and in the light of the low standards of attainment on entry to the school, students demonstrate satisfactory achievement. They make at least satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9, with increasingly good progress being made by the end of Year 11. The personal development of students is very good. This good overall achievement is a result of consistently good teaching strongly supported by an effective pastoral system. The school has a clear sense of purpose and an understanding of what needs to be done in order to continue to improve and it provides good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher, strongly supported by the senior management team, has developed a very strong ethos for learning.
- Most students achieve well as a result of the consistently good quality of teaching.
- Students demonstrate very good attitudes and behaviour in response to positive relationships and high expectations.
- The provision for students' pastoral care and personal development, particularly their moral and social development, is very good.
- The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and students' academic development are very good.
- The provision of extra-curricular activities enhances the academic curriculum very well.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The school needs to raise standards of attainment further in all subject areas.
- The school needs to meet the requirements for information and communications technology in all subject areas.
- Effective arrangements for the development and support of numeracy across the curriculum are needed.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 2000. Since that time the school has demonstrated good improvement. The key issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed to good effect. The headteacher, who took up appointment in January 2001, ensures clear educational direction and has a commitment to the development of the staff in the drive for school improvement. The school now has a strong senior management team which has a clear emphasis on improving learning for students. The very strong ethos which the school now has reflects to a very high degree the school's aims and values in its work. Students' behaviour and attitude to work are now very good features of the school. The quality of teaching is now a strength of the school and the staff development programme has a strong focus on training for the improvement of teaching and raising standards. As a result of these improvements students in Years 7 to 9 are now consistently demonstrating satisfactory achievement in all subject areas. The school has now developed a three-year School Improvement and Raising Achievement Plan which provides an effective structure for identifying school priorities and how these will be addressed. Very good procedures are now in place for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress, and exemplary practice in the use of information about students' attainment when planning for teaching and learning was seen during the inspection in several subject areas. However, this practice is not yet consistent across all subjects in the school.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key <i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E
	all schools			similar schools*	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	E	
A-Levels/AS-Levels	N/A**	N/A**	N/A**	N/A	

* *Similar schools in this table refers to schools with a similar level of free school meal take up*

***Numbers entered for A-Levels and A/S Levels in the school are insufficient for valid national comparisons*

Overall, results in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in English, mathematics and science were well below the national average in 2001. These results are also below the average for similar secondary modern schools. However, there has been a significant improvement in the results for English and science since 1999. The 2001 results in English

at the higher levels were the best that the school has achieved. Over the last three years attainment in mathematics has been lower than in the other two core subjects of English and science. The trend in the school's average points score for all three subjects at the end of Year 9 was broadly in line with the national trend. The observation of lessons and the work currently produced by students demonstrates that standards attained by the end of Year 9 are below those expected nationally in most subjects with the exception of history and physical education where they are in line with national averages.

The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE in 2001 shows a significant improvement on the 2000 results. However, this proportion was well below the national average and the average for similar schools (based on free school meals). When the prior attainment of students is taken into account, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades is in line with similar students nationally, although below the average for similar secondary modern schools. The proportion of students gaining five or more grades A* to G was well above the average for similar secondary modern schools and in line with the national average.

Students make at least satisfactory progress throughout the school when taking account of their low prior attainment on entry to Year 7. By the end of Year 11, an improvement in standards overall is evident from the lessons observed and the work seen. For example, students attain standards in line with national averages in history, health and social care, and physical education.

There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls when compared with the difference nationally. The achievement of students with special educational needs, throughout the school, is good. The very small number of students with English as an additional language also demonstrate good achievement.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students' attitudes to the school are very good. The majority work hard and want to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good, which helps to maintain a positive learning ethos. There is a friendly and orderly atmosphere in the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between staff and students are very good. Students show a respect for teachers and the opinion of others. Overall personal development of students is very good.
Attendance	Students' attendance is broadly average compared with other schools nationally.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is good with a significant proportion of very good teaching. Teaching is a strength of the school. The teaching was satisfactory or better in almost every

lesson seen, in the majority of lessons it was good or better, and in more than a fifth of lessons it was very good. These figures show very good improvement since the last inspection. The percentage of teaching which is good or better is consistent across Years 7 to 11. Students' learning is strongly supported by this high quality teaching.

In English the quality of teaching and learning across the school is good, and frequently has very good features. The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory overall, with examples of good and occasionally very good teaching. In science the quality of teaching overall is good with some very good features.

Teachers' planning is a significant strength of the teaching in the school overall. Very good planning for learning in the majority of subjects ensures that demanding yet achievable targets challenge all students. Teachers use well-organised lessons and high expectations as a means of ensuring that students behave and co-operate. The high expectations that teachers have of the students makes a significant impact on their learning. However, teachers do not always have sufficiently high expectations of what the higher attaining students can achieve. Students are clear about what is expected of them in relation to work, attitude and behaviour if they are to achieve well. As a result, students enjoy their work and behave in ways that are appropriate to effective learning. Learning is accelerated in lessons by the skilful management of students by the teachers. Students with special educational needs and the very small number of students with English as an additional language, are taught effectively and make good progress. Whilst there was very little unsatisfactory teaching, not all teachers consistently use assessment information to inform planning for learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities for students. There is a strong commitment to the inclusion of all students. The statutory requirement to use ICT across the subjects of the curriculum is not fully met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: the school provides learning opportunities that meet the needs of all students well. Good teaching enhances the students' learning
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is good and meets the needs of all students.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for students' moral and social development in the school is very good, with strong emphasis on the school as a moral community. There are a good range of opportunities for cultural development and provision for spiritual development is satisfactory
How well the school cares for its pupils	The pastoral system for the care of students is a significant strength of the school. The school provides a safe learning environment. Procedures for monitoring the academic progress of students are very good.

The school works well in partnership with parents to help them to support their children's learning. The sharing of assessment information and targets for improvement with students and parents at the Academic Review Days is a strength.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership, strongly supported by the senior management team. Overall, middle managers, including heads of departments provide good leadership.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There are very good systems in place for the monitoring and evaluation of performance, but these need to be implemented more consistently by middle managers.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The teachers are deployed well and they make good use of accommodation. Resources are used effectively. The school seeks best value in its purchasing decisions.

The provision of teachers, accommodation and resources is adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects students to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is well led and managed. • The school helps students to become mature and responsible. • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. • The school works closely with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small number of parents feel that their children do not get the right amount of work to do at home. • A small number of parents believe that the behaviour in school is not good.

The inspectors agree with the positive comments made by parents. It is the inspectors' view that homework is set consistently and, in the main, provides an appropriate extension to work done in school. The behaviour of students both in classrooms and around the school was found to be very good during the week of the inspection and is much improved since the last inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The school has agreed with South Kent College to establish and operate a branch of South Kent College on the school's site, initially for one year from 1st August 2001. This is called South Kent College Deal. The Sixth Form students are enrolled by the College as students of the College and are entitled to use all the facilities of the College. Sixth Form students are taught primarily by teachers employed by the school but some courses are taught by lecturers from the College, which also provides important services for the students. The vocational courses offered are appropriate for the number of students and their interests. The Sixth Form is well below average in size and consists of 42 students. Few students with five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C transfer to the Sixth Form although there are some with very good GCSE results. A few students transfer from other schools into the Sixth Form at South Kent College Deal. Two students have statements of special educational need. The Sixth Form grew slightly in numbers from 2000 to 2001. About 20% of students transfer from the main school to the Sixth Form. Most of the students entering the Sixth Form have GCSE grades that are well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The overall effectiveness of the Sixth Form is satisfactory. The proportion of the school's budget spent on the provision of teachers for the Sixth Form provision is a little less than the income the school receives for the students. However, resources are effectively used so that students achieve well in their main courses and in the key skills. The Sixth Form is improving the quality of education it provides, and standards are rising gradually. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The Sixth Form meets the needs of its students, and retention rates are satisfactory. The school's collaboration with South Kent College has improved provision for students during 2001-2. The strategic management of the Sixth Form is good, as is the day-to-day leadership. The Sixth Form provides Post 16 education for students in an area where take up rates are low. If they did not attend South Kent College Deal, many of the students would not continue in education. The Sixth Form provides satisfactory value for money.

STRENGTHS

- The results for AS ICT in 2001, which were above national averages for all schools.
- The good provision for courses in health and social care and business studies, including the good quality of teaching that enables students to make significant progress.
- The effective integration of the teaching of the key skills of communication, number and ICT with students' main areas of study.
- The improvements to the learning opportunities for students through the collaboration with South Kent College.
- There are very good links with the local community that provide students with many good opportunities for learning.
- The good quality accommodation and range of learning resources that help create a positive learning environment.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The analysis of students' examination results so that the value added by the Sixth Form is clear.
- Low attendance rates at some of the lessons seen, including general studies and the key skills lessons for the application of number and ICT.
- Devise a Post 16 development plan so that improvements in teaching and learning can be carefully targeted and further opportunities for students' personal development can be planned.
- The head of Post 16 provision does not have responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of all Post 16 teaching and learning.
- The target setting process at the Assessment Review Days, so that students and teachers work together to ensure that students achieve the targets they are set.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Business studies	Good. Standards are below expectations but are rising as teaching is now good. Provision has improved through the link with South Kent College. Students' learning is enhanced by the good links with the local business community. Students achieve well.
ICT	Satisfactory. The standards of the current students taking the ASVCE course are approaching national expectations although the AS Level results in 2001 were above national averages. Students have good access to computers. They achieve well.
Health and social care	Good. Students achieve well because teaching is good. The standards reached by the majority of students match the pass standard with a minority achieving merits and distinction.

Work in science was sampled. Seven students started a 3-unit AVCE science course in September 2000. Only three completed the first year and only one passed both compulsory tests. On the basis of test results and the work seen, standards are well below the national average. A small number of students follow a course in art, as an enrichment activity. Students are able to retake English and mathematics GCSE at the end of Year 12 if they did not achieve a grade C or above at the end of Year 11. In 2001, only 10% of students taking the examinations achieved a grade C or higher. 2001 was the first year that students have been entered for AS and GCSE examinations in general studies. Results were low and only two students achieved pass grades at AS and none at GCSE.

All students follow taught courses for Key Skills in communication, application of number and information technology. The students achieved a high rate of success in obtaining Level 2 qualifications. These results represent good Levels of achievement by the students but the relatively small number achieving Level 3 qualifications means that overall standards are below national averages.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Strengths include support on personal issues, careers advice, support for students with special educational needs, and careful monitoring of the work of individual students. The two sixth form teachers know the students well. Weaknesses are procedures for monitoring attendance and supporting students in achieving their targets following Academic Review Days.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Sixth Form	Good. The school has a clear vision for the development of the sixth form. Provision has been reviewed and improvements made through the collaboration with South Kent College. Successful steps have been taken to improve the quality of teaching. Equality of opportunity is successfully promoted and work is well matched to students' needs. The sixth form seeks to cater for a number of students who would not otherwise continue with their education. A weakness is that there is not a development plan for 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"> • Teaching is good, and teachers are helpful and approachable. • Their chosen courses are suited to their talents and aspirations. • Information about courses was clear, accurate and helpful, and they received helpful advice. • They are helped to study and research independently. • Work is thoroughly assessed so they know how to improve it. • They feel that they are treated as responsible young adults. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice about careers and what they should do when they leave school. • The school does not provide a good range of activities and enrichment outside the main courses.

Inspection evidence supports the students' positive views about the Sixth Form. A well qualified careers adviser from South Kent College visits the Sixth Form for four hours every Tuesday and effectively contributes to the main vocational courses that almost all students follow. A satisfactory range of enrichment activities is provided, including a general studies course, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Millennium Volunteers and further provision by the South Kent College. However, the students have yet to respond positively to these opportunities. Students do not have enough opportunity to take responsibilities within the main school.

OTHER INFORMATION

The governing body is responsible for drawing up an action plan within 40 days of receiving the inspection report, showing how the school will tackle the improvements needed. This action plan will be circulated to all parents at the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards of attainment are well below the national average overall. Analysis of the results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 for primary school pupils shows that the attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below the national average.
2. Standards in English at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well below the national average, although, the results at Level 5 and above were the best that the school has achieved. Whilst these results are below those for similar secondary modern schools, they are an improvement on those at the previous inspection. In science, whilst the results in 2001 were below the national average and below those of similar secondary modern schools, they improved significantly from 1999 to 2000, and this improvement has been partially maintained in 2001. The standards attained by students in mathematics were well below the national average and the average for similar secondary modern schools. Over the last three years attainment in mathematics has been lower than in the other two core subjects of English and science. The trend in the school's average points score for all three subjects was broadly in line with the national trend
3. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE in 2001 was well below the national average, and below the average for similar secondary modern schools. The proportion gaining five or more grades A* to G was in line with the national average and well above the average for similar secondary modern schools. Similarly, the proportion of students gaining one or more grades A* to G is in line with the national average and above that for similar secondary modern schools.
4. When the prior attainment of students is taken into account, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades is in line with similar students nationally. The proportion of students gaining five or more grades A* to G is well above the national average for similar students, and the proportion gaining one or more grades A* to G is above the national average.
5. The attainment of students at the end of Year 11 in 2001 fell short of the challenging targets set by the school. However, the 2001 results show a significant improvement compared to 2000, with twenty seven per cent of students gaining five or more A* to C grades compared to fifteen per cent in 2000. Satisfactory progress is being made towards meeting the current targets.
6. The attainment of grades A*-C at GCSE in 2001 is well below the national average for English and for English Literature. Results show an improvement in English and a significant improvement in English Literature since 2000. In both subjects, girls outperformed boys by a margin much smaller than the national margin. Students entered for English Literature in 2001 did significantly better than in the average of all their other GCSE subjects, while those entered for English did slightly worse. The proportion of students gaining grades A*-G in both subjects is in line with national averages. Fifty per cent of students entered again for GCSE in Year 12 achieved grades A*-C, though the number of entries was very small.

7. Standards of attainment of the majority of students in mathematics by the end of Year 11 are well below the national average. The progress of students throughout Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Some lower attaining students continue to make good progress during this stage. The proportion of students gaining grades in the range A* to C over the last three years has ranged between 25 per cent and 30 per cent compared to a national average of almost 50% in 2001. The proportion gaining these grades is below average when compared to similar schools. The proportion of students gaining grades in the range A*-G has been much closer to the national average. Overall students' performance in mathematics is lower than the other two core subjects at this stage. Boys performed better than the girls in the GCSE examination in 2001. GCSE results for Year 12 students who retake the examination have been poor. In 2001 none of the nine candidates achieved a grade C or better.

8. GCSE results in science in 2001 are well below national averages for the percentage attaining A*-C and in line with results for comparable schools. Results have improved over the last three years. The proportion of the entry and the year group attaining A*-G grades and the average point score per student in the year group in 2001 are both in line with national averages. Given the very low attainment of this year group on entry to the school and in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 1999, this represents good achievement overall, especially for those with lower prior attainment. Boys' results are higher than those of girls in 2001. This is in line with their higher prior attainment at the end of Year 9 in 1999.

9. Overall attainment at GCSE in the school is improving. In comparison with their performance in other subjects, students achieved better results in English Literature, history and double science. Students did not achieve as well on average in information and communication technology and design and technology. In comparison with the results for all high schools in Kent, the school's results were above average in English Literature, English Language, double science, history, geography and physical education.

10. The school offers Intermediate and Foundation courses in Health and Social Care which provide a valuable vocational accreditation for students in Years 10 and 11. The courses are well established in the school and give students the opportunity to experience the independent work ethos of GNVQ study. They also provide a step towards the intermediate and advanced courses in the Sixth Form. In 2001, fifty five per cent of students attained the equivalent to A*-C grades and eighty five per cent A*-G. This represents good achievement.

11. Based on the lessons and work seen during the inspection and in the light of prior attainment, students make at least satisfactory progress throughout the school. Standards attained by the end of Year 9 are below those expected nationally in most subjects with the exception of history and physical education where they are in line with national averages. By the end of Year 11, an improvement in standards overall is emerging, with students attaining standards in line with those expected nationally in history, health and social care and physical education.

12. Achievement in literacy across the curriculum is now satisfactory, although the school made a late start in implementing a coherent approach to raising students' attainments in literacy. Strategies implemented in Years 7 to 9, including 'booster' classes with intensive language support and weekly silent reading sessions, are already having a positive impact. Similar provision is also being made for a group of Year 10 students. Students use and understand subject-specific terminology in religious education and information and communication technology. Some subject areas, such as design and technology, history and English provide appropriate material that

matches students' differing reading capabilities. Discussion and reading aloud are fostered particularly in history and religious education, and teachers of science, English, information and communication technology and modern languages consistently pay attention to the presentation and accuracy of students' written work. However, the application of literacy skills is not yet consistent in all subjects of the curriculum.

13. The use by students of numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics is inconsistent and overall achievement is unsatisfactory. There is very limited use of number in English and modern foreign languages. Information and communication technology uses spreadsheets and databases but only at a basic level using simple formulae. In other subjects, including science and design and technology, students use measurements, graphs and charts but often to an insufficient level. Good standards are demonstrated in the use of graphs and bar charts in history. Greater emphasis is appropriately being given to raising students' standards of numeracy as part of the mathematics curriculum. However all subject areas need to make a more consistent contribution to this raising of standards.

14. Students with special educational needs and the small number of students with English as an additional language make good progress both in the Learning Support Centre and in mainstream classes. Their literacy and numeracy skills improve appropriately, supported by good quality assessment and target setting procedures.

15. The school recognises that overall standards are well below the national average. Whilst this is largely attributable to the very low prior attainment of students on entry to the school an expectation has been created through the leadership of the school that standards can be raised. Much change, particularly in teaching and learning, has been implemented recently. The work seen and lessons observed during the inspection demonstrate that these changes are having a positive impact on the raising of standards.

Sixth form

16. In 2001, the results for AS ICT were above the national average for all comprehensive schools. The standards achieved by the current Year 12 students are close to national standards and they are making good progress. In 2001, students took health and social care examinations at intermediate and advanced levels. Five took the Advanced GNVQ course, and obtained one distinction, one merit and one pass, with two students only completed one unit each. Eight students took the Intermediate course, and there were three merits and four passes, with one student failing to complete the course. For the current school year, the attainment of the majority of students on both courses matches course requirements and the pass standard, with a minority attaining above this level. In business studies, the results in 2001 were below national averages. Although still below average, the standards achieved by the current Intermediate and Advanced students is are rising.

17. Students are able to retake English and mathematics GCSE at the end of Year 12 if they did not achieve a grade C or above at the end of Year 11. In 2001, only 10% of students taking the examinations achieved a grade C or higher. 2001 was the first year that students have been entered for AS and GCSE examinations in general studies. Results were low and only two students achieved pass grades at AS and none at GCSE.

18. All students follow taught courses for Key Skills in communication, application of number and information technology. The students achieved a high rate of success in obtaining Level 2 qualifications in communication, application of number and information

technology in 2001 and five students achieved the higher Level 3 in information technology. These results represent good levels of achievement by the students but the relatively small number achieving Level 3 qualifications means that overall standards are below national averages. The standards achieved by the current Sixth Form students are similar to those in 2001.

19. Few students with five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C transfer to the Sixth Form although there are some with very good GCSE results. Most of the students entering the sixth form have GCSE grades that are well below average. They show good levels of achievement in the standards they reach from this low baseline.

20. During the current school year, only three students have left the Sixth Form after starting courses. The school's analysis shows that this is a satisfactory retention rate. The analysis of examination results to show the value added by the Sixth Form is at an early stage of development. However, for the seven students taking advanced examinations in 2001, two did worse than expected on the basis of their GCSE results in 1999, and five did better than expected. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well in the courses that they follow.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

21. Students' attitudes to school are very good. The majority work hard and want to succeed. The behaviour of students both in classrooms and around the school is very good and much improved since the last inspection. Students are polite to visitors and take pride in their school and its surroundings. They are only too willing to tell visitors that their school is a 'good school'. Older students and parents report that behaviour has improved significantly over the last year. This is supported by most classroom observations. All adults at the school provide positive role models for students by showing respect and consistency in their interactions. Students respect teachers and the opinion of others. Behaviour in the tightly packed corridors is managed well during class changeovers so that disruption is kept to a minimum and potential trigger points for conflict are curtailed. The dining hall at lunch-time is a pleasant and convivial place where students can socialise together.

22. Most students observe the school's code of conduct and respond effectively to the system of rewards. Students know the school motto, 'Care, Commitment and Success' and can talk about what it means to them. They can also talk with empathy about bullying and racism and recall few incidents, all of which were dealt effectively by teachers. They also acknowledged the positive ways in which the school responded to their concerns. Peer Mentors are trained to help discuss and resolve pupil disputes and problems in a non-threatening civil manner. The students have access to an experienced School Counsellor with whom they can discuss their feelings or seek help with personal problems. The pastoral team is very strong and benefits from outstanding leadership, focused sharply on doing whatever it takes to support and encourage individual students to do well.

23. The number of permanent exclusions in the school year prior to the inspection was in line with the average for similar sized schools. The number of temporary exclusions was very high in comparison with similar sized schools. Temporary exclusions are used as a last resort and have been reduced by half over the last year, as the school has become committed to creating a learning environment that is inclusive to all.

24. The quality of relationships is a strength of the school. Most students enjoy working together, interacting socially and participating in recreational activities. They listen to the views of others and support one another in showing good work. This was amply illustrated in a Year 8 French lesson where students were eager to demonstrate their skills in front of the class while being supported, with enthusiasm, by the rest of the class. The school celebrates effort and success by entering the names of students in the 'Good Work-Book ' and publishing this every week in the school newsletter. This supported learning environment provides students with confidence and raises self-esteem.

25. When given the opportunity, students can take responsibility to serve the school, for example, as prefects in Year 11, through the School Council or being trained in peer support. Students also take turns in collecting litter from around the school site. Sixth form students are allocated a small budget to enhance the common room and must decide the best way for it to be spent. Generally however, there are limited opportunities for students to take initiative, show responsibility and take a more active role in the life of the school. Now that the school has improved the behaviour of students and created an harmonious atmosphere, it needs to develop ways in which the students can take initiative and responsibility, and help more in the organisation of the school.

26. The attendance rate of students in the school is broadly average compared with all schools nationally. The rate of authorised absence is broadly in line with the national average, with the rate of unauthorised absence below the national average compared with other secondary modern schools. The support of parents is sought in ensuring that their children attend school as they should, and the school makes enquiries about the students on their first day of absence.

27. Students with special educational needs and the small number of students with English as an additional language show good attitudes to their learning. They persevere with work they find difficult and show interest in it. Other students reflect the inclusive nature of the school and students with special educational needs are fully accepted. Behaviour of students with special educational needs is good. Those students whose special educational needs are related to behavioural problems are managed well.

Sixth form

28. Students make good progress in developing the capacity to work independently. The main courses require them to take responsibility for their own work and to meet the various deadlines for completing tasks. The nature of the Sixth Form courses requires students to work independently as many tasks have to be completed in private study time.

29. In some of the health and social care lessons, students felt secure and made confident contributions to the lesson. They responded well to the teaching, listened carefully to others and were keen to express their own ideas. Students work well in groups, have positive attitudes to their work and their behaviour is always very good. The environment of the Post 16 centre and its resources are well cared for. There have been no exclusions. However, in most lessons, the majority do not volunteer answers to questions addressed to the whole group, and their replies to specific questions are often relatively brief. In a business studies lesson, there was a stimulating video about the ethics of advertising but the teacher had to draw the main issues from the students. A minority of students are not articulate and lack confidence when speaking in a group.

30. Relationships are very good amongst the students, and between students and the adults working at South Kent College deal. Students use their initiative and take responsibility for organising social and charitable events, and take responsibility in the main school as guides and car park attendants for special events. However, they have no opportunities for taking responsibility and using their initiative through working with students in the main school.

31. Attendance data for Post 16 students in the last autumn term was not available. During the inspection, attendance was satisfactory for most lessons but there were many absences for a general studies lesson, a mathematics GCSE lesson and key skills lessons for number and ICT.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. The overall quality of teaching is good with a significant proportion of very good teaching. Teaching is a strength of the school. The teaching was satisfactory or better in almost every lesson seen, in the majority of lessons it was good or better, and in more than a fifth of lessons it was very good. These figures show very good improvement since the last inspection. The percentage of teaching which is good or better is consistent across Years 7 to 11.

33. Overall, teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, and this has a positive impact on the students' learning. In history, for example, it leads to comprehensive planning for learning based on an assessment of what the students can do, and in religious education it leads to well-planned lessons that are taught with vigour and enthusiasm.

34. Teachers use well-organised lessons and high expectations as a means of ensuring that students behave and co-operate. The high expectations that teachers have of the students have a significant impact on their learning. Students are clear about what is expected of them in relation to work, attitude and behaviour if they are to achieve well. As a result, students enjoy their work and behave in ways that are appropriate to effective learning. Learning is accelerated in lessons by the skilful management of students by the teachers.

35. Teachers' planning is a significant strength of the teaching in the school overall. Very good planning for learning in the majority of subjects ensures that demanding yet achievable targets challenge all students. In English, for example, the high quality of planning of lessons and units of work incorporates a range of learning strategies to suit the range of students' needs. In geography, very good planning with tasks matched to students' differing levels of attainment ensures that all students are appropriately challenged. In religious education, lessons are planned with commendable attention to detail so that students know precisely what they are expected to do. Teachers generally use a variety of teaching methods which are well chosen to support learning and keep students interested in their work. However, the pace is not always sufficiently maintained to challenge higher attaining students for example, in some mathematics modern foreign languages and science lessons.

36. The overall use of time, support staff and resources is good. Resources are well chosen to enable students to develop a range of learning skills. In mathematics and religious education, for example, the good use of a wide range of resources supports to good effect the differing levels of attainment in each class. However, there is insufficient

use of information and communication technology to support learning across the curriculum. Throughout the school, when classroom assistants are present, they make a good contribution to the effective progress of students' work, with students with special educational needs and English as an additional language being particularly well supported in the classroom.

37. Overall, the quality and use of ongoing assessment in the school is good, with exemplary practice seen in English, history, religious education and science. The development of ongoing assessment informs teaching and curriculum planning and the good use being made of student target-setting helps students to see more clearly what they need to do in order to improve. Whilst students' work is marked regularly and constructive written comments on the students' work is helping them to improve in several subject areas, this approach is not yet consistently applied in all subject areas. Homework is given on a regular basis and is generally well used to extend class-work and help students prepare for future lessons.

38. Good teaching plays a crucial part in enhancing the learning of students with special educational needs. Both within the Learning Support Centre and around the school, teaching is never less than satisfactory and is often very good. Teachers' planning is effective and takes account of the whole range of pupils' needs. Particular strengths of the teaching are the experienced special educational needs co-ordinator and the involvement of subject related specialist with pupils withdrawn to the Learning Support Centre. Learning support assistants make an effective contribution in the support they give to teachers and pupils. There is good improvement since the last inspection.

Sixth form

39. The quality of teaching and learning in the Sixth Form is good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons and a high proportion of lessons were good or better. There were several common strengths. For example, teachers had good levels of knowledge about the subjects they were teaching and about the assessment procedures. Consequently, teachers begin lessons with clear statements about what the students will learn during that session. Only occasionally, these objectives were vague. Teachers help students understand what they must do in order to reach the necessary standards both in their coursework and in examinations. Because of the good subject knowledge, teachers are able to use questions to involve all students and to build up their knowledge and understanding step by step. In an ICT lesson, the teacher used students' ideas well and gave very clear demonstrations about macros. Teachers use a variety of tasks within lessons to enable students to achieve the learning objectives. For example, during a business studies lesson, one task was to find answers to specific questions using different web sites and then reporting the findings back to the rest of the class. Teachers have high expectations and usually ensure that students work at a good rate in lessons, with time-limited tasks. All teachers provide effective monitoring and support for individual students during lessons.

40. Teachers provide students with effective feedback during their assignments. Assignments are broken down into steps and students have to meet the deadlines for these. At these steps, teachers provide students with feedback to help them understand how to improve their work.

41. In several lessons, work was well matched to students' differing levels of attainment. For example, in a GCSE English lesson, the teacher used different questions to challenge students from a wide range of attainment and, in a key skills lesson for the application of number, tasks were well matched to students' wide range of attainment. Work is generally

well matched to students' individual needs, including those with special educational needs. A learning support assistant is attached to the Sixth Form, and provides very good support for the learning of the students with statements as well as for other students as opportunities allow.

42. There were occasional weaknesses in several lessons but no common weaknesses. In one lesson, the teacher's questions at the start of the lesson did not check students' mathematical understanding thoroughly. In another lesson, some students finished their ICT task and then did not know what to do. In one lesson, students' learning was not very good because the pace of work for higher-attaining students slowed as time-limited tasks were not used.

43. The quality of teaching and learning in health and social care was good. The head of department has a very good knowledge of course requirements and guides students' learning within a focused framework. Students learn well because they feel secure and understand the evidence base needed to attain specific grades. Teachers share lesson objectives at the start of each lesson and use a style of questioning which encourages discussion and challenges and extends students' thinking. Lessons have a variety of learning activities which motivate and interest students. Teachers circulate well, working with small groups of students and encouraging worthwhile discussion to promote understanding. Teaching and learning is insufficiently based on primary evidence. Visits to health care settings and visits from practitioners are not arranged frequently or early enough in the courses. Thus teaching does not draw sufficiently on students' outside experiences.

44. In ICT, teaching is always satisfactory and sometimes good. A strength of the teaching in one lesson was that the learning objectives were clear, although in an ICT key skills lesson the learning objective was not precise enough to be helpful to the students. Strengths of the teaching are good subject knowledge that results in clear demonstrations which use students' ideas well when, for example, teaching about macros. During lessons, students' progress is carefully monitored and they are helped to overcome any difficulties they face. The learning resources provided for students are clear and comprehensive. In one lesson, some students completed the tasks that had been set and did not then know what to do next.

45. Good quality teaching in business studies enables students to learn well and make rapid progress. The main strengths of the teaching are the teachers' good levels of knowledge and understanding of business education, the brisk pace of learning as teachers use time efficiently, and the effective use of a wide range of learning resources. A weakness in teaching is that there is as yet little use in lessons of specific, assessable learning objectives linked to the needs of individuals and groups in the class.

46. The teaching of specific lessons for key skills was satisfactory. However, a strength of the teaching is that the key skills are integrated into students' work in business and health and social care so that the key skills are reinforced and applied during their day-to-day work.

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

47. The school provides a curriculum which has breadth and relevance for all students and which conforms to the requirements of the National Curriculum in terms of the subjects which it offers. Statutory requirements are not met, however, in the provision of opportunities to use Information Communications Technology (ICT) to support learning in all subjects across the curriculum. Although all students have ICT lessons throughout the school, very few planned opportunities were seen by inspectors for students to use computers and other

forms of modern technology to solve problems, practise and develop skills, or carry out research in other subjects.

48. There is an unusually broad range of foreign language learning opportunities for this type of school. All students learn French throughout, and the majority also learn Spanish up to the end of Year 9, with the option of adding this language to French as a GCSE subject in the upper school. However, the students having the opportunity to learn Spanish in the lower school are those who are not considered to need to be in the booster classes in literacy which begin in Year 7. There are dilemmas about what happens to the students in the literacy classes when they reach their targets: if they transfer to Spanish they are already behind the rest of the class. The school should consider more carefully the literacy needs of all students and ensure that there is unified curriculum provision across the board. Many subject departments are conscious of the need to develop literacy, and the quality and range of students' writing has improved since the school was last inspected, but the attention paid to literacy work in some areas of the curriculum still needs more consistency in terms of effective strategies employed by all teachers. Arrangements for teaching basic skills of numeracy outside the mathematics department are much less in evidence however, and this matter needs to be addressed.

49. The planning of the curricular opportunities which the school provides is very good. In most subjects, lessons are well planned to take into account the learning needs of all students, and this has a significant impact on the progress which they make, including students with special educational needs. The school demonstrates a very strong commitment to the provision of equality of access for all. All members of the school community are valued, and there is a clear emphasis on social inclusion in all aspects of the curriculum, both in policy and in practice. Care is taken to ensure that all students derive the maximum benefit from their education, and public examination results are closely monitored in terms of gender.

50. The curriculum provides very good opportunities for students' personal development, most particularly in the areas of moral and social development, where the very good interpersonal relationships at all levels of the school community and good role-models provided by teaching staff and other adults lead to a positive atmosphere which promotes good learning. There is a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education which makes a very positive contribution to students' personal development, and which includes suitable elements on sex education and attention to drug misuse. There is now a tighter co-ordination in this area, and the school has addressed successfully the issue of fragmentation of personal development noted at the previous inspection.

51. Provision for the spiritual development of students is satisfactory. There is a full programme of house and school assemblies which provide students with time to reflect on spiritual and moral issues; for example in a lower school assembly during which students reflected on issues of tolerance with particular reference to schooling in Northern Ireland. Weekly themes are followed up in many form tutor periods, but this good practice needs to be more widespread. Students would also benefit from more opportunities to participate in assemblies. Overall, the school complies with the statutory requirements for collective worship. Within the curriculum, opportunities for spiritual growth are provided very well in religious education, through discussion on wider issues such as the sanctity of life; in science, and in dance, where students from the school performed at the women's world day of prayer. There are, however, limited opportunities for spiritual development in other subject areas.

52. Provision for the moral development of students is very good. There is a strong emphasis on the school as a moral community. Firm procedures are in place to help

students distinguish right from wrong and teachers and other adults provide very good role models throughout the school. There are comprehensive policies on bullying and sex and drugs education and the personal, social and health education programme is organised well to address these and other moral issues. There is an effective system of awards and merits to celebrate achievement and the moral development of students is sustained well through charity work, the Youth Action group and initiatives such as the production of a CD on issues of race which was produced by students with a grant from the Prince's Trust. Within the curriculum, moral development is sustained very well in personal, social and health education; in religious education, where moral issues such as abortion and euthanasia are discussed in Year 11; in science, where Year 9 students discussed the moral dilemmas posed by genetic diseases and cloning; and in history and modern foreign languages.

53. The provision for social development is also very good. The house system is organised well to give students a sense of identity and a school council has been introduced which provides an effective channel of communication between staff and students. Older students are involved in a number of initiatives to help their younger counterparts, such as the prefect system and the peer mentoring scheme. There is a strong programme of lunchtime and after school activities to enhance the social development of students, including clubs in various sports, music, computers and art. An activities week in the summer term also provides all students with further opportunities for social development. Positive relationships are a strength in the school, creating an harmonious atmosphere and a strong sense of community. Opportunities for social growth are provided in most curriculum areas, where there is an emphasis on group work and collaboration.

54. The cultural development of students is good. There is a wide programme of visits and other activities to widen the horizons of students. These include recent trips to France and Austria and school participation in national dance week. Cultural awareness is also fostered through many activities, including music, drama, dance and sports clubs. Many speakers also visit the school to enhance cultural development; for example a theatre group has provided students with workshop activities on asylum seekers and refugees, and an adult education visitor worked with Year 7 students on Islamic signs and symbols. In the mainstream curriculum, there are opportunities for students to celebrate their own culture and cultural diversity within the wider world in religious education, with a very strong emphasis on world religions and the discussion of issues of race and the treatment of asylum seekers. Opportunities for multicultural education are also provided in history, modern foreign languages and science.

55. The school's provision for careers education, including work experience and information about learning opportunities Post 16, is very good. Well-planned careers education is delivered through the personal social and health education course which begins in Year 7, and is designed to encourage positive attitudes to employment and further education. It is effective in equipping students with the relevant knowledge and understanding, which will assist them to make informed choices about occupations and further study at the end of their time in school.

56. Work experience takes place in Year 10. In addition to matching student choices to vacancies with business partners, teachers work hard both to prepare students for their placements and to ensure that they are fully debriefed when they return to school. The comprehensive students' booklet contains a section where students are encouraged to reflect on their achievements in order to derive the most benefit from their placements. In recognition of the effectiveness of the scheme, the school has received the prestigious quality award from the Kent Business Partnership.

57. The local and wider community gives very good support to the curriculum which the school provides – there is close collaboration with local experts and representatives and with

local and national companies who provide information, incentives and rewards. The taught curriculum, however, does not offer a sufficient range of vocational courses for students, although the health and social care course offered at present provides suitable progression from Year 10 through into the Sixth Form.

58. The school curriculum is suitably complemented by a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including trips, visits and holidays, competitive games and study support. Summer and Easter schools are arranged to give extra support for students' learning. There are science clubs and the ICT facilities are open at lunch times for students' use. The Childrens' University has provided information sessions for students at the week end. Students also have very good opportunities to participate in activities involving performing arts. Dance club is held every lunch-time.

59. Overall, the curriculum which the school provides has improved markedly since the last inspection.

Sixth form

60. The curriculum provided for the small Sixth Form, organised in conjunction with South Kent College, is appropriate to students' needs and aspirations, and is kept constantly under review. There is open access to all courses and this provides very good opportunities for many students who might not otherwise continue with their education.

61. The curriculum has been improved by removing the offer of courses in which students were unsuccessful, the addition of general studies for all students and the integration of work in the key skills of communication, number and ICT with students main courses. Nearly all students follow an intermediate or advanced vocational course in health and social care or business studies together with the compulsory course in general studies and courses in key skills. The general studies course is available at GCSE for intermediate students and AS Level for advanced students. In addition, students may opt for an AS ICT course and a few students choose to follow an office skills course or some units of the course. This is taught by staff from South Kent College. A few students are taking a science AVCE course in Year 13 or a AS course in art, but these will be discontinued later this year. The courses in health and social care, ICT, business studies, key skills and office skills match the needs and aspirations of the students and are well matched to their individual needs. The advanced courses in health and social care and business studies can be studied as three, six and twelve unit courses. The courses that students follow provide coherent programmes and are designed to enable students to transfer to other courses and providers at the ends of both Years 12 and 13. The plan for the development of Post 16 provision is that South Kent College will provide a leisure and tourism course in September 2002.

62. Very few students are involved in enrichment activities in addition to their taught courses. An exception is group of boys who form the South Kent College soccer team that meets each week for training and matches. Some advanced health and social care students are Millennium Volunteers as part of their course. A student activities officer from South Kent College attends the Deal site for two hours per week. This work is at an early stage of development as it seeks to involve the students in a broader range of enrichment activities and increase their interaction with students from other College sites.

63. The provision for Careers advice and education is very good. Well-qualified specialist staff from South Kent College visit the Deal site for four hours each week. Students may book an appointment with the adviser or use a drop-in service. In addition, the adviser makes a good contribution to both the business studies and health and social care courses.

64. South Kent College Deal has very good links with the local community that have a very positive impact on students' attainment. Students taking the advanced health and social care course work as Millennium Volunteers with the local police in primary schools. Some other students following courses in health and social care have regular placements in primary schools and care homes. A multinational company sponsored the marketing of the new Post 16 provision as well as providing resources for the GNVQ courses on, for example, basic hygiene and risk assessment. For business studies, students are involved in a marketing project with a local organisation and this will form the basis of one of their assignments. The work experience co-ordinator at South Kent College is used to help organise the work experience placements that are a part of every course.

65. Students have many good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the compulsory general studies courses and their other courses. The general studies courses includes aspects of religious belief, values and morals, art, music, the impact of the media on our lives, multicultural society and political systems. The use of internet resources is encouraged by these courses. The general studies course satisfactorily meets the requirements of the local agreed syllabus. For example, during one general studies lesson, students were encouraged to reflect on the caring and support mechanisms within families and, in a business studies lesson, students considered the ethics of the advertising campaign by a multinational fashion company. The health and social care courses provide very good opportunities for students' personal development through the many ethical and social issues that are discussed

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

66. The school makes very good provision for the care, health and welfare of students. The school has continued to improve provision in this area of its work since the last inspection and has secure systems in place to support all groups of students. Parents are content that their children are safe and happy in school. They welcomed the introduction of close circuit television cameras which has made the school site feel more secure. The policy and procedures for health and safety are effective. There are good arrangements for first aid including a medical room that is staffed by qualified first aiders and well used by the students. Satisfactory procedures for child protection are in place.

67. Students benefit in pastoral terms from having the same tutor and head of house from Years 7 to 11. Additionally, Year 11 students volunteer to look after the Year 7 students during their first term in school. Due in part to the relatively small size of the school, all students are known to all the staff and their individual needs are well catered for. The care and compassion shown by the staff creates an extended family atmosphere. This is well appreciated by parents and supports students' learning and progress. The whole ethos of the school is supportive and develops positive attitudes to learning and high self-esteem in students. Each student is valued and the school tries very hard to meet the academic and personal needs of every individual. These strong procedures ensure that the support given to every student is of consistently high standard and is a strength of the school.

68. Attendance is well monitored by the school which recognises that good attendance is crucial in raising the educational standards of the students. Good links with the families and the effort put in by the school office, the Educational Welfare Officer and the deputy

headteacher has helped to maintain the attendance rate at a reasonable Level. All students are telephoned on the first day of absence. Registration periods are conducted promptly at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and pupils quickly settle to their work. During the inspection week punctuality was good and most students were prompt to lessons.

69. The school has very effective systems in place for monitoring and supporting the academic progress of students. All teachers are now provided with a baseline of information about the attainment of each student on entry to the school. A target setting system has been introduced, with all students having individual targets set. These are written on the students' work so that students can easily identify their own level of progress. The targets are monitored by teachers and reviewed at least termly, when teachers meet with parents and students on the Assessment Review Day to discuss their child's progress and future targets.

70. The very effective systems introduced to monitor and promote good behaviour are having a significant impact in the school in that the behaviour of students is now a strength in the school.

71. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning varies across subject areas. In English, science and history for example, teachers use the information they have on students very well to plan lessons and units of work that incorporate a range of learning strategies to suit the range of individual students' needs. Teachers make good use of students' Individual Education Plans in this respect. However, in art and modern foreign languages for example, assessment information is not yet consistently used to good effect to guide curriculum planning.

72. Arrangements for monitoring the academic and personal progress of students with special educational needs are good. Clear procedures are in place which monitor standards and progress and accurately identify strengths and weaknesses. All pupils are assessed on entry and regular procedures are in place throughout the school to monitor their progress. Targets are expressed accurately and Individual Education Plans are of good quality.

73. The school's provision for careers guidance is very good. The school has a well-equipped careers library and students benefit from a variety of computer programs, which contain information on requirements for entry to a wide range of jobs. In addition, all students receive help on how to complete application forms and how to conduct themselves to best effect in interviews. All students in Year 11 meet the careers officer, and they discuss progress towards personal targets in their action plan with their form tutors. The school organises regular visits by local employers, training providers, colleges and the armed forces, whose representatives are only too happy to offer advice to the students.

Sixth form

Assessment

74. The moderators' reports in 2001 for the vocational courses show that the school meets the requirements of the awarding bodies. The feedback received from these moderators are clearly used to improve course planning and teaching. The school's own assessment information is also used to improve curriculum planning. So, for example, in the current school year the order in which the units of work in health and social care have been improved.

75. Each term, students and their parents or carers attend an assessment review day. The school uses tutorial review reports provided by South Kent College for these meetings. These reports include assessments by each tutor and self-assessment by the student. These provide students and their parents or carers with useful information. At the meeting, targets for improvement are agreed. Overall this is a good process but the targets are sometimes rather general and some students cannot remember what their targets are. Weaknesses in the process are that it does not include the identification of the strategy by which the student will achieve the target or a clear process of monitoring and support by the tutor to ensure that the student achieves the target.

76. Students receive good feedback from teachers for their assignments. For each assignment, students have final completion dates and interim completion dates when they have to meet certain objectives so teachers can check progress. The interim completion dates are used to provide students with feedback that makes clear the strengths and weaknesses of their work so that they know what needs to be done to improve their standards. It is helpful that the two main Sixth Form teachers are tutors for the students who take the courses that they each teach.

Advice, support and guidance

77. The two sixth form tutors monitor students' attendance using the attendance registers provided by South Kent College for each taught session. The tutors follow up any unexplained absence by telephoning students, and they audit overall attendance of students. When a student's attendance falls below 80%, a tutor contacts the student's parent or carer. During the last autumn term, the attendance of three students fell below 80%. However, at the time of the inspection, there was no available attendance data for the autumn term and no evidence of students' attendance levels apart from the daily signing in book. The national expectation is that students' attendance rate will be about 90% on average. At present, systems for recording and monitoring attendance are unsatisfactory. Tutors also monitor students' progress with their work and, where there are emerging difficulties, involve parents and the careers adviser.

78. Support on personal issues is provided by the two Sixth Form tutors. In addition, a students' adviser from South Kent College attends for four hours each week and is able to help students access the support and advice to which entitled from different agencies. Overall provision is good.

79. During Year 11, students are informed about opportunities for continuing their education Post 16 by presentations by representatives of different organisations. In addition, every student has an interview with an independent careers adviser and the school's head of Post 16. Many parents attend this interview. For those students who transfer to the school's Sixth Form, there is an extensive induction programme that takes place in both the Deal and the Dover sites of South Kent College. This induction programme helps students settle effectively into Post 16 work. There is close liaison with the special educational needs co-ordinator in the main school and this helps ensure that students with special educational needs make good progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

80. Only ten per cent of parents responded to the inspection questionnaire, of whom over ninety per cent are satisfied with the education the school provides. Analysis of the questionnaire returned by parents, indicates that parents feel that the school is well led and

managed and that they would feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems, should the need arise. The small number of parents who raised concerns identified the amount of work done at home and the behaviour of students. The inspectors agree with the positive views. They judge that the use of homework is effective, and that the behaviour of students both in classrooms and around the school is very good.

81. Parental involvement in the general life of the school is limited. Apart from parent governors, parents are not involved in the development of policies and procedures. However, although parents are not a visible and pro-active force around the school, they do support the school when called upon, by attending concerts, fashion shows, school trips and by helping to raise funds. The Parent Teacher Association supports the school well by fund raising and arranging social events. The recent Christmas Fair raised approximately £1,000 for the school.

82. Each student in the school has a planner, used principally to record homework, which is signed by parents and checked each week. The school planner system is explained to parents at the Year 7 induction evening. As a result, many parents of Years 7, 8 and 9 become effectively involved in their children's school work. However, in Years 10 and 11, most planners are not used well in home-school liaison.

83. The school invites parents to attend an Academic Review Day each term. This is attended in large numbers by parents. Both staff and parents report that it is an efficient and effective way to discuss the progress made by students, and the targets set for future learning. Parents of students in the Learning Support Centre attend for an afternoon and are informed about ways in which they can help their children at home. School reports on students' progress are useful and informative, showing parents the work students have covered as well as appropriate targets set.

84. Parents give a good level of support to their children when they participate in sporting, musical or dramatic events. The school provides a comprehensive prospectus that covers all aspects of school life and the Governors' Annual Report to Parents fulfils all statutory requirements. The school provides a weekly 'Thursday' Newsletter for parents, which is informative and celebrates all aspects of school life, such as informing parents of the students who have had their name put in the 'Good Work' book. The overall quality of information provided for parents is good.

Students' views of the Sixth Form

85. Students show a good level of satisfaction with the sixth form provision. In the questionnaire completed by seventy-one per cent of students, a high proportion agreed that the teaching is good and that teachers are helpful. They are helped to study and research independently and students feel that their work is thoroughly assessed so that they know what to do to improve. Students feel that their chosen courses are suited to their talents and aspirations; information about courses is clear, accurate and helpful, and they receive helpful advice. They feel that they are treated as responsible young adults.

86. Parents and students did not express any major concerns about the Sixth Form.

87. A minority of students expressed concerns about the availability of careers advice. However, students are well supported by a qualified careers adviser from South Kent College who visits the Sixth Form for four hours every Tuesday. Students may make appointments beforehand or use a drop-in service. There are good displays about careers and a wide range of resources available to students. The careers adviser also contributes to the main

vocational courses that almost all students follow. A minority also expressed concerns about the availability of enrichment activities outside of lessons. A good range of opportunities are offered to students through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme or the Millennium Volunteers for example, and a member of staff from South Kent College visits each week to promote a variety of activities in addition to taught courses, including those suggested by the students themselves, but few currently take up these opportunities. However, students do not have enough opportunity to take responsibilities within the main school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

88. The headteacher provides excellent leadership for the school. She ensures clear educational direction and has a strong commitment to the development of staff in the drive for school improvement. The school has a strong senior management team which places a clear emphasis on improving learning for students. Senior managers are effective in fulfilling their responsibility to promote high standards of student achievement and to support middle managers and teaching staff in achieving targets for improvement. The very strong ethos of the school reflects to a very high degree the school's aims and values in its work. The school has a clear commitment to, and effective strategies for the inclusion of all students.

89. The headteacher has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to ensure continued improvement. The School Improvement and Raising Attainment Plan provides an effective structure for identifying school priorities and how these will be addressed. The plan is reviewed regularly by the Governor's Curriculum Committee and by Kent School Services Unit. Significant developments have been identified and are being addressed, including raising student expectations and standards, using data to improve teaching and learning, and the improvement in middle management. Easter revision classes, mentoring of all students in Years 10 and 11, and Academic Review Days have been introduced and INSET on the use of data, calculating value-added and target setting is ongoing. More heads of department have been appointed and training to enhance the skills of middle managers to ensure effective implementation of the school's Performance Management policy has taken place.

90. The school has developed a good strategy for Performance Management. All teachers now have performance targets, and common procedures have been agreed for monitoring and review. All teachers are observed on a termly basis either by their line manager or by Kent Curriculum Support Advisers.

91. The school recognises the pressures created by responding to bureaucratic demands, but takes a pragmatic approach to handling all necessary requirements. Appropriate management systems are used effectively to help reduce the pressure.

92. Overall, the leadership and management of subjects is good. Where it is very good, for example, in English, history, music, religious education and science, there is clear vision of what has to be done to further improve, monitoring of the work of the department is systematic, schemes of work are effective, and the monitoring and evaluation of students' performance is good. While appropriate procedures have been developed for monitoring, evaluation and the development of teaching and learning, monitoring the work in departments by middle managers as a means of raising standards is being used more effectively in some departments than others. Greater consistency of practice by heads of department is needed.

93. Statutory targets for student performance have been set. These targets are kept under review with officers of the local education authority and revised appropriately in the light of success to date. The school's ability to set whole school targets is increasingly informed by the development of target setting for individual students.

94. Governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The governing body is very effective in fulfilling its responsibilities with the exception of the statutory requirements relating to the provision of ICT. The governors' committee structure is used effectively to contribute to the development and monitoring of school policies, such as the policy for special education needs. Governors are well informed about developments in the school through the headteachers' reports and through visiting presentations by heads of department and other senior staff. They make an important contribution to determining and supporting priorities in the School Improvement and Raising Attainment Plan, and are effective in monitoring the school's finances.

95. Management of the school's finances is good. Educational priorities are supported through the school's financial planning and the budget is regularly reviewed. Best Value Principles are applied effectively through regular review of the best use of the resources available to the school and the means to effect the desired improvements. The school makes very good use of all grants and additional funding, and links decisions on spending to educational priorities to very good effect.

96. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. The school has used additional funding to increase staffing in order to help raise students' standards of attainment. The pupil:teacher ratio is well below national averages for secondary modern schools. This is carefully planned and is an effective use of resources. Since the last inspection, staffing has become more stable with fewer teachers leaving the school. There is a sound programme for the induction of new staff which is well adapted to the diverse needs of the new teachers who range from newly qualified teachers to experienced heads of department. The staff development programme has a strong focus on training for the improvement of teaching and raising standards. However, difficulties in the recruitment of suitable specialist mathematics teachers have limited the effect of any improvements that have been made in this subject area since the last inspection.

97. Accommodation is satisfactory for students' learning. Most of the science laboratories and some of the design and technology rooms have been refurbished. A start has been made to improving the furniture in the relatively small English classrooms. Toilets have been refurbished and are now satisfactory. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection. The school is in the process of seeking to secure funding to carry out major improvements to the school's accommodation and learning resources.

98. Since the last inspection, good improvement has been made to learning resources which are now satisfactory. Subjects had been underfunded for learning resources in comparison with other Kent High schools. Consequently, expenditure on learning resources has been increased and resources for each subject are now satisfactory. This improvement is contributing effectively to the school's drive to raise standards.

99. The learning resource centre has a stock of about 9000 books which is below the recommended figure for a school of this size. There is a good bank of computers with Internet access. The full-time librarian is working with subjects on the development of learning resources, for example, for geography, English and design and technology. Groups of students use the centre at lunch time and after school but it is not yet fully used. There are no student librarians. This is a developing resource for students' learning.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

100. The management of the sixth form changed in September 2001 when a head of Post 16 provision was appointed. The head of Post 16 provision has yet to receive any management training. There is not a Post 16 development plan and this is a weakness. The two main teachers, one of which is the head of Post 16 provision, have to carry out much of the administration connected with Post 16 provision and this is an issue to resolve as the collaboration with South Kent College develops.

101. The Sixth Form is led and managed effectively within the context of the whole school, as provision has been reviewed and the collaboration with South Kent College has been introduced to improve the education opportunities for students and increase the number of students who benefit from Post 16 education. The collaboration is in an interim stage and the agreement between the school and South Kent College only covers the current school year. The aim of the collaboration is to widen Post 16 participation in education. In addition to the benefits of collaboration with South Kent College, the sixth form has benefited from the good improvements made across the whole school to teaching and learning, and the school's ethos in the last year. The governing body has been fully involved in the changes to the sixth form and the collaboration with South Kent College.

102. The school generally monitors and evaluates the work of the Sixth Form to a satisfactory extent. Where weaknesses have been identified, action has been taken to secure improvement. However, a weakness is that although the results of the general studies examination were low in 2001 and some improvements have been made to the teaching, there has been no monitoring and evaluation to ensure that standards are rising in the current school year. There are also weaknesses in the presentation and analysis of the Sixth Form examination results for 2001 as there is not a comprehensive set of data and only a partial analysis to show the value added by the Sixth Form to students' achievements.

103. The proportion of the school's budget spent on the provision of teachers for the Sixth Form provision is a little less than the income the school receives for the students. Resources are effectively used so that students achieve well in their main courses and in the key skills. The Sixth Form is improving the quality of education it provides, and standards are rising gradually. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The Sixth Form meets the needs of its students, and retention rates are satisfactory. Sixth form provision is cost effective. The principles of best value are applied to a good extent. The school compares the quality of education it provides with other schools. It has taken steps to find out whether what it provides is what is needed and this has led to the collaboration with South Kent College so that it can provide what is best for the students.

Resources

104. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum because of the additional staffing provided by South Kent College. The College provides the teachers for the office skills course, and a teacher to contribute to the GNVQ Intermediate business studies course.

105. There is a relatively large Post 16 centre that provides good specialist accommodation separate from the main school. This includes a common room, a modern ICT suite and specialist rooms for business studies and health and social care. The computers have Internet access and students make a great deal of use of the Internet for research. The

staffing from the school is adequate and supplemented with some staff from South Kent College who provide, for example, teaching for the office skills course and a contribution to the GNVQ intermediate business studies course. There are good learning resources for the main courses. For example, in health and social care there is a good range of books and resources produced by the school, together with good access to computers. Students make good use of the Internet for research.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

106. This is an improving school. In order to improve further and to raise levels of attainment further, the governors, headteacher and teaching staff should:

- Continue to improve standards of attainment throughout the school by further developing systematic monitoring and evaluation at middle management level to ensure that:
 - * Teaching and learning are having a positive impact on standards and the progress that students make;
 - * Consistent use is made of assessment information by teachers across all subject areas to inform planning for learning.

(Paragraphs: 1-3, 5-8, 13, 35-37, 71, 91, 106-109, 115-117, 125-127, 133, 137, 139, 146, 149, 152, 154, 161-163, 165, 170-171, 173, 177, 183, 185, 191)

- Ensure that ICT is used effectively across all subjects of the curriculum throughout the school;

(Paragraphs: 36, 47, 93, 108, 120, 130, 137, 143, 152, 159, 175, 191)

- Ensure that there are effective arrangements for the development and support of numeracy across the curriculum.

(Paragraphs: 13, 124, 129, 149, 163, 191)

Sixth form

- Devise and implement a system for analysing students' achievements so that the value added by the Sixth Form provision is clear

(Paragraphs: 20, 75)

- Improve the systems for monitoring and encouraging students' attendance;

(Paragraph: 31)

- Devise a Post 16 development plan which includes strategies for improving standards in general studies and for improving students' personal development.

(Paragraphs: 30, 31, 99, 101)

Other issues to address:

- Ensure that the head of Post 16 provision has the management responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of all Post 16 teaching and learning;

(Paragraph: 101)

- Ensure that the target setting process on assessment review days is followed up so that students have clear strategies for achieving their targets and their progress towards these targets is carefully monitored and supported by their tutors;

(Paragraph: 75)

- Investigate the provision of alternative and more appropriate courses in mathematics and English for the students who did not achieve grade C or higher at the end of Year 11.

(Paragraph: 17)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	124
	Sixth form	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		57

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	0	30	60	32	2	0	0
Percentage	0	24	48	26	1	0	0

Sixth form

Number	0	2	9	7	0	0	0
Percentage	0	11	50	39	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	437	42
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	224	5

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	49
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.29
National comparative data	8.10

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.25
National comparative data	1.10

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	58	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	29	25	32
	Girls	21	11	13
	Total	50	36	45
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	56 (42)	40 (54)	50 (52)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	10 (17)	16 (20)	8 (13)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above:	Boys	9	31	36
	Girls	12	16	17
	Total	21	47	53
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above:	School	23 (50)	53 (59)	59 (67)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above:	School	2 (20)	6 (29)	6 (22)
	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	44	53	97

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	13	39	41
	Girls	12	50	52
	Total	25	89	93
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	26 (15)	92 (85)	96 (89)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	28.1
	National	39.0

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-Level or AS-Level examinations:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	2	5	7

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	0	3.1	3.1	0	0	0
National						

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	7	100
	National		

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	0
White	475
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	81	2
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)	32.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.6

Education support staff:**Y7– Y13**

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	440

Deployment of teachers:**Y7– Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
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Average teaching group size:**Y7—Y11**

Key Stage 2	N/A
Key Stage 3	20.7
Key Stage 4	20.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	1,475,250.00
Total expenditure	1,474,603.00
Expenditure per pupil	3,004.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	122,780.00
Balance carried forward to next year	123,427.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	14.8
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

480
45

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	49	11	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	49	4	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	49	13	2	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	58	11	2	7
The teaching is good.	29	58	2	0	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	44	7	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	36	0	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	40	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	40	51	7	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	38	60	0	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	53	2	2	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	47	2	0	11

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths:

- Improvement in Year 9 assessment results since the last inspection;
- The quality of the curriculum and lesson planning;
- The quality of teaching;
- Consistent monitoring of students' attainment and progress and the use of this information in planning for learning;
- The support provided for students with special educational needs.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards of attainment in all years;
- Appropriate provision for more able students;
- Opportunities for students, especially in Years 10 and 11 to take greater responsibility for their own learning;
- Use of ICT.

107. Students enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment well below the national average. Standards in English at the end of Year 9 in 2001 are well below national averages, although the results at Level 5 and higher are the best that the school has achieved. Girls outperformed boys by a margin much smaller than that found nationally. These results are also well below those for similar schools nationally, but they are an improvement on those at the previous inspection, and they remain higher than those in mathematics and science. The trend in results is rising at a rate slower than the national trend.

108. The attainment of grades A*-C at GCSE in 2001 is well below the national average for English and for English literature. Results show an improvement in English and a significant improvement in literature since 2000. In both subjects, girls outperformed boys by a margin much smaller than the national. Students entered for English literature in 2001 did significantly better than in the average of all their other GCSE subjects, while those entered for English did slightly worse. The proportion of students gaining grades A*-G in both subjects is in line with national averages, which represents at least satisfactory achievement for students with low prior attainment. Fifty per cent of students entered again for GCSE in Year 12 achieved grades A*-C, although the number of entries was very small.

109. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below expectations in Years 7 to 9. Students are good at oral work, and they can make lively and accurate contributions to class discussions, and improvise dialogue readily. A small proportion lacks confidence orally. Work in drama helps students to develop group as well as individual speaking and to make objective evaluations of their own and others' work. Their ability to listen to each other is, however, not well developed. Students in all years read aloud clearly and most understand satisfactorily the literal meaning of what they read: those in a Year 9 lesson found detecting inference very difficult. A small minority of written work is of good quality. At its best it is well structured, confident, and adopts varying styles to match purposes. The most able students show good understanding. Middle and lower attaining students' writing is usually very close to speech: their work is frequently poorly organised and, even when ideas are satisfactory, written style is monotonous and repetitive. Many students word-process their work but they do not proof-read it. Their use of ICT is satisfactory overall. Those with special educational needs make good progress over time, whether they receive in-class support or are selected for

'booster' classes in literacy. There is little overall difference in attainment between boys and girls, though by Year 9 the most able girls' writing is more varied, lively and successful than equivalent boys' work. Students of all abilities make satisfactory progress, though the higher attaining students in Year 9 are insufficiently challenged. Students with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

110. Students' attainment by the end of Year 11 is also below average in relation to national standards. Their oral skills and confidence have improved, so that by Year 11 most can engage in lively discussion and contribute helpful ideas. The most able individuals offer articulate, extended and accurate observations on their reading. Students listen well. Reading aloud is mostly clear and accurate, even when it lacks expression. Most students use reference books effectively, though the lower attaining students have difficulty with alphabetical order. A few show insight and some original thought in their responses to reading. Reading 'between the lines' for inference is a weakness, though levels of direct comprehension are satisfactory. As earlier, written work is largely below expectation in its style, structure and content. Although most students take care over presentation, re-drafting rarely produces significant improvement. Most students write within a severely restricted vocabulary. There is some interesting narrative writing in both years, and the best work includes thoughtful personal responses, accurate analyses and occasional pieces of perceptive and powerful self-expression. Some students develop the capacity to sustain fluency in extended pieces of work. Differences in quality between girls and boys are insignificant, though girls' work tends to be neater. Students with special educational needs make good progress, as they are well supported and class teachers well aware of the subject-specific targets on their IEPs (Individual Education Plans).

111. In all years, students are keen to learn, and because they are well taught they achieve satisfactorily across the school. This does not, however, fully compensate for the below average attainment levels from which they embark on their courses.

112. Since the previous inspection, standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 have risen. Curriculum planning has developed to reflect the requirements of the Years 7 to 9 English Framework. There is now increased emphasis on reading, with the whole school engaging in silent reading at a set time each week. Literacy Progress Units and 'booster' classes for short-term intensive literacy practice have been introduced to raise the unduly low reading ages of some students in Years 7 to 9. and teaching is now well matched to students' levels of prior attainment. The department is therefore in a good position to further improve the standards of students' attainments.

113. The quality of teaching and learning across the school is good, and frequently has very good features. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use skilfully to facilitate students' learning. This was exemplified in a good Year 8 drama lesson on preparing for a production, where the teacher's knowledge of presentational techniques, her eye for detail as well as for the larger picture, enabled her to bring the group together in successful and expressive collaboration. Teachers have worked hard to establish good working relationships with students which create a positive atmosphere for learning, because their management and control is the more effective as a result. Both parties show mutual respect, in all years, and this contributes positively to the quality of learning in lessons and so to their standards of attainment. This was seen in a very good Year 11 lesson comparing short stories, in which the teacher's skilful questions challenged students to justify the assertions they were making without making them feel they were being criticised. The result was high levels of attention and commitment by students, some of whom contributed perceptive and detailed comments. Planning of lessons and units of work is of high quality, incorporating a range of learning strategies to suit the range of students' needs. Teachers make good use of students' IEPs in this respect. Class teachers contribute to the language targets in students' IEPs and review individuals' progress towards them. They are aware of the limited concentration-span of many of their students and so often provide a sequence of short-term and varied activities to sustain students' interest and attention. This works well. Those with learning difficulties benefit from individual support

by a learning support assistant or close attention and encouragement from the class teacher. Marking of work is consistent, regular and accurate. Teachers' comments usually combine diagnosis with development. There is some inconsistency in the way that individual staff use precise skill-based targets to help students improve the quality of their work. Responses to students' work in lessons provide a powerful incentive to sustained efforts, especially when the teacher, as seen in a Year 7 lesson on compiling a talk, reacted diplomatically to a student's error by appealing to the rest of the class to help him with other examples. Lessons contain an element of literacy work based on the English Framework, and these accumulate to provide a unit of work on, for example, spelling or vocabulary. The use of writing frames is proving beneficial. Expectations of students in some classes are not always sufficiently high and on several occasions teachers missed opportunities to apply time limits for the completion of a segment of work. Conversely, students in Years 10 and 11 are sometimes prevented from taking sufficient responsibility for their learning.

114. The English team is led and managed very efficiently and effectively. Communications between team members are very good and staff are committed to continuing the improvement in students' levels of attainment. Very effective systems are now in place for monitoring and supporting the work of the team, and these are already having a beneficial effect on the quality of teaching and learning. The same applies to systems for tracking students' attainment and progress. Within the last twelve months the team has produced high quality curriculum plans - short, medium and long-term - to reflect the emphasis now required on skills and objectives in Years 7 to 9 and the new requirements for GCSE. The development of continuous assessment enables teachers to exert greater influence over the process of students' learning, and the use being made of student target-setting - though inconsistently at present - helps students to see more clearly what they need to do in order to improve. Teaching methods and materials are now matched more closely than before to students' learning needs and levels of prior attainment, Departmental documentation is very good and it provides staff with a clear sense of shared purpose as well as information.

115. The provision for literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. The school has made a late start in implementing a coherent approach to raising students' attainments in literacy, which are low. A system of 'booster' lessons has been established for students in Years 7 to 9 who have unduly low reading ages or have achieved below National Curriculum Level 4 at the end of Year 6. These lessons provide intensive short-term practice in basic language skills and are already having beneficial effects. Similar provision is also being made for a group of Year 10 students whose achievement is impeded by very low reading-ages. Year 6 entrant pupils attended a Summer School in 2001, but no analysis of their progress since then has been carried out. A weekly silent reading session for all students has been introduced. Developments within individual departments since the staff training day in the autumn have not been monitored and there is at present no working party to do so. Literacy practice across departments therefore differs widely. Subject documentation in English, design and technology, music, GNVQ health and social care, physical education and science contains policy statements on literacy. In addition to these subjects, students use and understand subject-specific terminology also in religious education and information and communication technology. Some subject areas, such as design and technology, history and English provide material matched to students' differing reading capabilities. Students' standards of reading allow the great majority to take full advantage of the curriculum, and those in 'booster' classes receive additional help with this. Discussion and reading aloud are fostered particularly in history and religious education, and teachers of science, English, information and communication technology and modern languages consistently pay attention to the presentation and accuracy of students' written work. In other subjects, students have limited opportunities to develop their oral skills; specialist terms or key words are little used and understood by them, and there is no consistent approach to improving the technical accuracy of their written work.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Satisfactory progress of the majority of students throughout the main school with some lower attaining students making good progress;
- The system of individual target setting is beginning to raise expectations;
- Effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the department.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards of attainment of the majority of students by the end of Years 9 and 11;
- Frequent changes in staffing in the department have led to discontinuity of the students' experiences;
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning;
- A whole school approach to the development, support and use of numeracy.

116. Standards of attainment of the majority of students in national tests by the end of Year 9 in mathematics are well below the national average. Since students enter the school with well below average levels of attainment their progress throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 is satisfactory. Some lower attaining students do however make good progress. Although the proportion of students reaching the expected level in the national tests at the end of Year 9 rose in 2000 it decreased in 2001 and was lower than at the time of the last inspection in 1999. Results in 2001 were also well below average when compared to similar schools. Performance in mathematics over the last three years has been lower than in the other two core subjects of English and science. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls at this stage.

117. Standards of attainment of the majority of students by the end of Year 11 are well below the national average. The progress of students throughout Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Some lower attaining students continue to make good progress during this stage. The proportion of students gaining grades in the range A* to C over the last three years has ranged between 25% and 30% compared to a national average of almost 50% in 2001. The proportion gaining these grades is below average when compared to similar schools. The proportion of students gaining grades in the range A*-G has been much closer to the national average. Overall students' performance in mathematics is lower than the other two core subjects at this stage. Boys performed better than the girls in the GCSE examination in 2001. GCSE resit results for Year 12 students have been poor. In 2001 none of the nine candidates achieved a grade C or better.

118. The standards of work seen in Years 9 and 11 classes are well below the national average. In broad terms the top sets in these years are working at national average levels whereas the other sets are working below these levels with several groups working well below expected levels. Students in a low attaining Year 9 group, for example, were undertaking work on different types of angles including recognising those which were acute, right angles and obtuse. Although the work was basic many had some difficulties in understanding the meaning of angles and in recognising the different types. On the other hand a newly formed top set in Year 11 had a good understanding of the steps required leading to the solution of linear algebraic equations. The majority of the students had a target grade of C in the forthcoming GCSE examination.

119. Teaching and learning are mainly satisfactory, sometimes good and occasionally very good. All lessons are well planned. They all contain clear learning objectives which are

shared with the students. Most lessons contain a good range of learning activities with students working as a group and individually on solving examples. A few classes involve students in working collaboratively in smaller groups. Very good support is provided for students when they are working on an individual basis. In many classes several members of staff in addition to the main teacher are available to provide additional support. There is good use of a wide range of materials including worksheets which have been specifically designed to meet the differing levels of attainment within each of the classes. For most classes homework is regularly set, marked and returned to the students. However, for a few classes the responses of many of the students are poor and opportunities to consolidate the work carried out in classes are missed. In a few classes during the group work there is relatively restricted questioning of the students and in others the pace is laboured and insufficiently challenging for the students. There have been significant recent changes in staffing in the department. The frequent changes have had an adverse effect on teaching and learning and in particular on the continuity of experiences of the students. Several non-specialist teachers are employed. Whilst no teaching is unsatisfactory there were a number of classes in which more helpful examples could have been chosen and greater use of specialist terms made.

120. The majority of students have a positive attitude to their mathematics work. Most students are well motivated in classes and behaviour, with a few minor exceptions, is good. Attendance at most classes is good though this is poorer for a number of Post 16 classes. Students are attentive during the group work and generally respond well to the questions that are asked of them. In a few classes some students are easily distracted, go off task and make little or no progress with the examples that they have been set to undertake. Standards of presentation of students' work are almost always at least satisfactory and frequently good. Some students make unsatisfactory responses to the homework that is set.

121. The mathematics curriculum is appropriate. Greater emphasis is being given to the further development and support of students' numeracy skills particularly in Year 7. It has been recognised by the school that aspects of the schemes of work require further development. Although some use is made of information and communication technology this is restricted and further opportunities for its use are currently being missed. Use of numeracy across subjects varies from unsatisfactory to very good. Much of that which does take place is largely unplanned at a school level. The school recognises that there is a need to develop and support policies and procedures relating to the use and support of numeracy across subjects. A number of students resit GCSE mathematics in Year 12 having achieved low grades at the end of Year 11. Several students, and particularly those with very low grades, have an unrealistic aim of achieving a grade C after a further year of study. The school should investigate the provision of an alternative and more appropriate programme of study for these students.

122. The academic performance of students is closely monitored. The school has a system of National Curriculum target levels for students up to Year 9 and projected GCSE grades for students in Years 10 and 11. There is a system of regular academic review days during which individual student's progress is reviewed and future targets are set. Good quality and detailed reports are sent to parents indicating individual students' attainment and progress. Recent changes in staffing and in the groupings of some of the students mean that some teachers have a relatively limited knowledge and restricted records of students for some of their classes. Overall, the use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is good.

123. There have been a number of recent changes in the staffing in the department including its head. This has led to discontinuities in terms of leadership and management and in terms of the students' experiences. The recently appointed head of department has begun to accurately identify the main priorities relating to its future development. More challenging

targets are in the process of being developed and expectations have been raised. Monitoring and evaluation procedures including lesson observations are undertaken. As part of a school-wide policy test and examination results are regularly reviewed with senior management. In a number of classes more than one teacher is present and this provides opportunities to share good practice. Staff in the department meet on a regular basis to discuss and when appropriate resolve relevant issues. Accommodation in use by the department is satisfactory and good use of display materials is made. A range of text-books and worksheets are available to the department and these support the teaching and learning well.

124. Difficulties in the recruitment of suitable specialist staff have minimised the effect of any improvements that have been made since the last inspection. Standards have remained well below national average levels though progress of the majority of students throughout the school is satisfactory. All teaching and learning is now at least satisfactory and some is good. Attitudes and behaviour of students overall is now good. Target setting for individual students has been introduced and monitoring and evaluation procedures including lesson observations have been significantly extended. Expectations are rising and priorities which should lead to improvements in standards are in the process of being identified.

125. The school recognises that there is a need to develop and support policies and procedures relating to the use and support of numeracy across subjects. Much of the work involving numeracy within subjects is largely unplanned at a school level. Its use varies from nil or very restricted in a number of subjects to good or very good use in a few subjects. There is very limited use of number in English and modern foreign languages. Additionally, although spreadsheet and database work involves number in information and communication technology, examples chosen are basic and only involve simple formulae. Although many other subjects make satisfactory use of number, in many there are opportunities for further development and use. In science and design and technology, for example, some use is made within calculations including measurements and of graphs and charts. However, in these subjects and others there are missed opportunities and a need to more systematically develop and use students' numerical skills. In art and design, religious education and physical education schemes of work refer to numeracy requirements and good use is made in history of graphs and bar charts. Greater emphasis is appropriately being given to the further development and support of students' numeracy skills as part of the mathematics curriculum. However this work needs to be extended and more closely matched to the numeracy requirements of subjects.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- Very good leadership and management;
- Improvements in standards since the last inspection;
- Monitoring, evaluation and the development of teaching;
- Monitoring of students' attainment and progress and the use of this data in planning for learning;
- Achievement of lower attaining students and those with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11;
- Students' attitude to science.

Areas for improvement:

- Achievement of all students in Years 7 to 9 and of more able students in Years 10 and 11;
- Further improving the consistency in the quality of teaching;
- Complying with National Curriculum requirements for the use of ICT to enhance learning in science;
- Greater opportunities for the students to learn independently.

126. Students enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment well below the national average. In national test results at the end of Year 9, the average point score and percentage attaining Level 5 or better are also well below national averages and results for similar schools. Results improved significantly from 1999 to 2000 and continues to improve in 2001, although the proportion attaining Level 6 or better has dropped back. The trend in results overall is rising at a rate greater than the national trend. Boys' results are higher than girls' in each of the last 3 years.

127. GCSE results in 2001 are well below national averages for the percentage attaining A*-C and in line with results for comparable schools. Results have improved over the last 3 years. The proportion of the entry and the year group attaining A*-G and the average point score per student in the year group in 2001 are both in line with national averages. Given the very low attainment of this year group on entry to the school and in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 1999, this represents good achievement overall, especially for those with lower prior attainment. Boys' results are higher than girls' in 2001 in line with their higher prior attainment at the end of year 9 in 1999.

128. Standards of work observed during the inspection confirm this low level of attainment in Years 7 to 9. For example, the higher ability students in Year 9 can write accurate word equations for reactions between metals and oxygen, water and acids but are unable to correctly use symbols and formulae for commonly used chemicals. Students in middle sets describe simple reactions using names of chemicals but cannot complete accurate word equations without help. Those in the lowest sets can describe properties of metals but not their typical reactions. In Year 11, more students are working at higher levels and standards are closer to the national average. However no students are likely to attain the very highest grades. For example, in the highest set, most students can explain the purpose and mechanism of reduction division, although some are confused about the effect of replication followed by two divisions. Middle sets can explain how variation arises and the normal

distribution of variation, although confusion in interpreting graphs inhibits their understanding. Students in the lowest sets can name two organisms in a simple environment such as a forest, but cannot explain their interrelationship. Progress is always at least satisfactory and is good for lower attainers and those with special needs.

129. The quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to very good throughout the school and is good overall. Planning is exemplary for topics and individual lessons. Prior attainment data and records of individual needs are used to design activities to support learning for each student, often individually, and additional teachers and learning support assistants provide extra support in many lessons. This leads to a high level of time on task and good progress, especially for those of lower prior attainment. One strength of the teaching is the tight structure of lessons, with an opening challenge settling students quickly to learning, brisk recap of previous learning, well focussed and varied main activities and a plenary review. This approach is particularly effective with lower attaining students and leads to good productivity and high concentration. For example, in a lesson with the lowest attaining Year 9 students, an introductory challenge on cells ran seamlessly into work on variation and inheritance. Activities based on short video clips and microscopes linked to computers built an understanding of how genetic material is passed on. An excellent review also introduced a homework activity well matched to the learning from the lesson. Another strength is the motivating activities selected, as when a mixed ability Year 7 group were designing travel posters promoting visits to the planets in the solar system. This included internet research as well literacy and numeracy skills. All students easily assimilated key facts about the planets. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons, teacher exposition and presentation lacks clarity and emphasis, classroom management is poor and the lessons lack momentum, so that students lose interest. For example, in a Year 11 lesson with low attaining students, the introductory question and answer session lacked focus, and background chatter prevented even the more motivated students from hearing. Few students were keen to attempt the worksheet that was distributed and their learning was limited.

130. Opportunities to use literacy skills are identified in every lesson, for example definitions of key words and opportunities to read aloud or use writing frames. This enables students to extend their vocabulary, develop confidence in reading and improve comprehension of written text. Numeracy is less well planned and students' numeracy skills are generally poor. For example top set Year 11 students were unable to interpret a graph showing the distribution of numbers of polar bears against percentage of fat in their body, while students in a low set in Year 8 were unable to accurately read a thermometer, limiting their understanding of thermal insulation. The structured approach and a high level of teacher exposition can inhibit the development of independent learning skills and limit the progress of the higher attaining students. For example, in a top set Year 10 on plate tectonics, student activities were limited to naming evidence they would expect to see that demonstrated that the Alps and Himalayas are fold mountains. In Year 7, there is insufficient differentiation in practice in the lessons to extend and challenge high attainers. For example in a lesson on acids and alkalis, a common activity to identify pH and acidity from the colour of universal indicator in the solution was rapidly completed by higher attainers, while the lowest attainers took much longer. Outcome targets set for students are very challenging. This helps to maintain high staff and student expectations. On occasions, however, it can lead to unrealistically demanding work completed with considerable teacher help, rather than less demanding work completed unaided. For example in a low set in Year 10, where few of the students could understand and use simple word equations, they were encouraged to copy unbalanced symbol equations for reactions of sodium and potassium with water from a model of lithium and water and led to believe they were completing GCSE grade C work.

131. Leadership and management within the department are very good and have contributed significantly to rising standards since the appointment of the present head of department eighteen months ago. The focus on monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching through tailored professional development programmes has already had a significant effect on the quality of teaching and learning. Although there is still some unsatisfactory teaching, this is being addressed. Team teaching and video feedback are well used and a recently appointed advanced skills teacher is assisting the staff. The induction programme for the graduate trainee is carefully structured, balancing challenge and support. Departmental documentation is excellent and contributes to a strong sense of teamwork and a self-critical approach to the work of individuals and the department. Schemes of work are working documents, evolving and developing in response to evaluation of their effectiveness and changing needs such as the national Key Stage 3 strategy. The time allocated for double science in Years 10 and 11 is slightly low, limiting opportunities for work beyond the immediate demands of the syllabus. The improvement plan is rather sketchy although it includes appropriate priorities and strategies to raise achievement. The commitment to further improvement is very strong and although the department is small, staff work hard to offer extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities such as Year 7 science activities, examination booster classes and participation in Science Year. This leads to good attitudes to science. A recent injection of funds and a DfES grant have resulted in greatly improved accommodation and resources, including data-loggers and electronic microscopes. Use of information and communication technology in science is developing but does not yet meet statutory requirements. A full time laboratory technician provides valuable support to teachers, who are appropriately qualified.

132. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in external test and examination results, quality of teaching, quality of accommodation and resources and leadership and management. The department is very well placed to address the areas for development and further improve the achievement of students in science.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Caring, secure department in which students feel safe and work hard;
- Students appreciate the individual attention given to them by the teachers;
- Positive work ethic in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement:

- More rigorous recording and use of assessment to inform planning for learning;
- Communication to students regarding their present levels of achievement;
- The use of ICT to enhance learning throughout the school.

133. From observation, since no information regarding National Curriculum levels is communicated to the school from the contributory Primary Schools, pupils enter the school with well below average standards of attainment in art and design.

134. From lessons observed and scrutiny of work, by the age of 14 the majority of pupils are attaining Level 3 with a minority achieving Level 4+. Although below average, this does represent satisfactory progress over the three years in the secondary school. Students are able to create abstract compositions based on the work of Picasso and local seascapes with a surreal influence. Although the technical skills in drawing and painting are not well

developed, there is an understanding of colour blending, reasonable spatial awareness and strong use of primary colours in the collage work students are undertaking. They are beginning to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of techniques, materials and processes.

135. There were no students entered for GCSE in 2001 therefore no comparison with national averages can be made. However, from the lessons observed there were indications that the students in Year 11 have the potential to obtain grades B to E at the end of the course. This represents at least satisfactory progress. They work in a variety of media and there is some accurate 3D figure modelling based on Cubist art and the sculptures of Rodin. There is some accurate pen and ink drawing obvious in their work on self portraits and a strong understanding of proportion. There is good control of charcoal in preliminary sketches for later development and intricate lino prints which are to be transferred to material and T shirts. There is, however, some copying from secondary source material by the less confident students rather than an independence in developing their own ideas.

136. Art is offered as an enrichment subject for a small number of post 16 students.

137. Teaching throughout the school is consistently satisfactory in lessons. Good, caring relationships are created in the classrooms which encourage the positive responses displayed by the students. Clear work sheets are provided for the students outlining assessment objectives which enable them to discuss work and understand the requirements of the project. Clear and skilful demonstrations from teachers indicate techniques to be used in student compositions which support them and help in the development of both design and processes for the classes. Teachers encourage individual students, question and challenge them and often use student work to illustrate teaching points being made. This ensures that students are confident in discussing their work and eager for it to be used and displayed. Students are appreciative of the teachers' sensitive responses to their creations and so work with enthusiasm and commitment. Teachers could encourage students to use specialist art vocabulary more in conversation to develop the quality of analysis and evaluation of their own and other students' work. The strong rapport established in the classrooms means that pupils stay on task throughout the lessons and helps to underline a positive work ethic particularly in Years 10 and 11.

138. The departmental schemes of work cover the attainment targets of the National Curriculum for Years 7 to 9 and the requirements of the AQA GCSE art syllabus. However, more rigour is required in the application of criteria to establish both attainment levels in the first three years and the forecast of grades for Years 10 and 11. There is very little regulated recording of assessment data. This must be addressed to enable the department to analyse its results, ensure the progress of students and develop future planning. It is also important that students are informed, through the use of relevant criteria, of their present levels and grades. This will mean that they can, with help from the teacher, establish their own agendas for improvement and target setting. The department needs to create a formal policy regarding marking of work and written feedback to students. The teacher in charge of art supports the graduate trainee in the department and they work together on lesson preparation. The rooms are light and airy but there is little display space. The budget for the department just covers consumables and many of the resource books in the art rooms belong to the teachers themselves. ICT is not, at the moment, being used in the department.

139. Since the last inspection, there is now consistent satisfactory teaching and schemes of work are in place to cover the requirements in art from Year 7 to Year 11. This represents satisfactory improvement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of current provision in design and technology is good, with evidence of significant, recent improvement.

Strengths:

- The department is well led by the new management;
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Students respond positively to the subject;
- High quality food technology room and resources.

Areas for improvement:

- Need to develop a comprehensive development plan;
- Improve standards of attainment;
- Enhance student access to all materials and ICT opportunities;
- Improve procedures for tracking students' achievements and setting targets.

140. Attainment in design and technology was well below the national average at the end of Years 9 and 11 in 2001. At GCSE the percentage of students achieving grades A* - C was well below the national average. The standards attained by girls was very low. The percentage of students achieving grades A* - G is also below the national average with girls again performing less well than boys. Students achieve standards in design and technology which are very low in comparison with their other subjects; students are performing at least half a grade lower. Standards recorded in National Curriculum teacher assessments for technology at the end of Year 9 for 2001 are below the national averages.

141. Inspection evidence gained from lesson observations demonstrates that students in Years 7 to 9 are now making good progress. In Years 10 and 11 students are now making satisfactory progress. Students with special educational needs throughout the school are making progress appropriate to their prior attainment.

142. The quality of teaching overall in the department is good, and ranged from satisfactory to very good. Good and very good teaching was characterised by strong subject knowledge, good planning of lessons and classroom management and high expectations of students. In these lessons basic skills were taught well – for example, in Year 7 and Year 10 food lessons students were taught skills that gave students a very clear understanding of what was expected of them and it helped them understand the task and apply the skills they had been taught. Students with special education needs are particularly well supported during these lessons. All students were able to measure accurately using different types of scales, develop a basic recipe, produce a flow chart of activity and evaluate their work. In the best lessons teachers provided a good range of opportunities for students to learn, lessons were well planned to take account of a range of students' needs and teachers gave students feedback that helped and encouraged them to improve their work. There was little evidence available of teacher assessment prior to the inspection. However, evidence was available from the beginning of the spring term and this evidence indicates that the procedures currently in place are secure enough to identify the needs of students to support the planning of lessons and provide good feedback to students to help them know and understand how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve their work. However, there is currently insufficient information available and inadequate procedures in place to track students' achievements and set them targets.

143. In all lessons observed students responded well to the teaching with enthusiasm and commitment. They are busy learners who concentrate hard and persevere in order to keep on task and produce quality outcomes. Students work particularly well together for example in Year 10 food technology, when evaluating, tasting and discussing results of their practical

work. In Years 7 and 9 pupils demonstrated a sound knowledge of basic skills but still relied heavily on teacher reassurance especially in Year 9. There is a need to develop students' skills and opportunity in individual research. In food technology most students are able to demonstrate an adequate understanding of health and hygiene procedures. A minority of students in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress in food and resistant materials.

144. Throughout the department students are restricted in the use of information and communication technology due to the lack of up to date resources in the department. This restriction does not give students access to opportunities to support and enhance their design work. A few pupils in Years 10 and 11 have made some sterling efforts to access ICT resources to present evaluations and enhance their projects but this is not consistent. This lack of opportunity has a negative impact on the quality of students' work as they prepare for examinations at GCSE.

145. Currently students do not receive a balanced curriculum, as they do not have the opportunity to experience a full range of materials in Years 7 to 9. Students do not have access to experience working with materials such as textiles.

146. The new leadership of the department ensures that there is a clear commitment to improve and raise standards. There has been a significant improvement within the past term. All staff are new to the school and the department since the start of the school year. The head of department has already made an impact within two weeks of taking over the leadership of design and technology. This strong team has produced relevant schemes of work; good lesson plans and related resources. Currently there is no development plan, however, the department is aware of the urgency to produce a development plan for both short and long term needs of the department.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is satisfactory with some good features.

Strengths:

- The improved GCSE results in 2001;
- Teachers have good subject knowledge;
- Effective classroom management which secures a good response and positive attitudes to work from students;
- Lessons are well planned so that work is well matched to students' differing levels of attainment.

Areas for improvement:

- The school's guidance for coursework is sometimes misinterpreted by students;
- Need for a development plan for the subject;
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to enhance students' geographical learning.

147. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2001 showed that standards are below national expectations, and the attainment of the current Year 9 students is below average. For example, higher-attaining students describe the differences between North and South Italy in detail, with effective use of ICT to present work including graphs and maps. The work of higher-attaining students matches national expectations although there are some weaknesses in, for example, their understanding of population pyramids. Year 9 students select an industry and then identify the factors affecting the location of that industry. Higher-attaining students have a good knowledge of the chosen industry and a comprehensive

understanding of the locational factors. Their standards are above national expectations. Average-attaining students have some weaknesses in their understanding of, for example, the importance of transport for the location of a steel works. Lower-attaining students have little understanding of locational factors. Overall this represents satisfactory achievement.

148. The GCSE results in 2001 were much better than results for 2000. The proportion of students achieving grades A* to C was average for all secondary modern schools nationally but below average for all schools nationally. The current Year 11 higher-attaining students worked with a challenging article and were able to identify the causes and consequences of desertification in the Sahel. They were working at higher GCSE grades. This represents good achievement. Average and lower-attaining students were mostly working at below average grades as they used a text to draw diagrams to show the processes of overgrazing and overcultivation, which they explain in simple terms. Overall, students demonstrate satisfactory achievement by the end of Year 11. Many students put a great deal of effort into their coursework and record a wide range of data, but some misunderstand the school's guidance and do not focus their work sufficiently on a specific question or hypothesis.

149. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good. Common strengths of the teaching include the use of time-limited tasks that gives a brisk pace to students' learning, and very good planning with different tasks matched to students differing levels of attainment so that all are challenged by the tasks. In some lessons, tasks are linked to three different National Curriculum levels, each with an extension task, so there is challenge in the work for all students. Another common strength is that classes are well managed to secure a good response from the students who have positive attitudes to work. There were strengths seen in individual lessons. For example, Year 7 students were required to apply their mapping skills to decide about the best place to open a supermarket in the Canterbury area. When students answered questions, the teacher uses follow-up questions to ensure that students' answers were clear and fully explained. In a Year 8 class, students had the opportunity to carry out their own enquiry into the nature of Brazil's golden triangle as they were required to use their initiative and think for themselves.

150. Occasional weaknesses in teaching were identified in the scrutiny of students' work. For example, there were a few failures to correct mistakes in students' written work, and lower-attaining students were set the task of drawing scatter graphs but they were not able to interpret their graphs. In one lesson, there was a slow start so that students did not start working for 20 minutes while instructions were given and resources distributed.

151. For the GCSE course, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Strengths of the teaching are the setting of tasks at two levels of difficulty, the effective of questions to recap earlier work and to help students develop their understanding of key geographical ideas, and clear explanations based on good levels of subject knowledge. In one lesson, the learning support assistant was busy in providing effective support for students right from the start of the lesson, and this resulted in good learning by two students with statements of special educational need. Students' work is well marked with helpful personal comments but specific things students can do to improve their learning are not recorded. Weaknesses in teaching and learning include learning objectives that are too general, and insufficient use of labelled diagrams and sketch maps to make key teaching points or to record summary notes about a topic such as the tropical rain forest or population pyramids.

152. Students' responses to teaching are very good. Relationships amongst students and between teachers and students are very good. Students work well collaboratively and are prepared to persevere with work that they find difficult. Their behaviour is good and the GCSE coursework shows that many students prepared to work hard.

153. The scheme of work for the GCSE course has the outline details for each lesson but gives little direct guidance to teachers. Local examples are not always used for case studies of, for example, coastal management or urban transport. There are some good examples of the use of presentation software in Years 9 and 10, but insufficient use is made of ICT to improve students' learning of geography. Similarly, there are some good examples of geography contributing to students' literacy skills. For example, younger students have some good opportunities for personal writing and key words are occasionally defined. This is an aspect for further development. A start has been made to compiling a portfolio of students' work to demonstrate the department's understanding of National Curriculum standards and to ensure consistency of assessment standards. It will be important to complete the portfolio. A new assessment system has recently been introduced and it will be important to check that this is manageable. There is no development plan for the subject and it will be vital to have one to help ensure that the quality of geography education improves. The analysis of 2001 GCSE results was good and included monitoring the results by gender. There are useful monitoring meetings each term with a senior manager but the head of geography has insufficient involvement in the monitoring of teaching and students' work.

HISTORY

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is always at least good. Teachers know their subject well;
- Teachers use assessment very effectively. They produce resources which allow everyone to aim for high standards and achieve some form of personal success;
- Students enjoy history, speak highly of their teachers and have very good relationships with their classmates;
- The department is well led and teachers share a vision for how the subject can be developed.

Areas for improvement:

- The provision for ICT is underdeveloped;
- The main teaching room does not have sufficient materials on display.

154. Standards of work seen during the inspection demonstrate that, from a low baseline when they enter the school, students make good progress during the first three years in acquiring both historical knowledge and also in understanding why there are different interpretations of the past. Because teachers know their students well and because they provide different levels of work to meet their needs, standards are overall average by the end of Year 9; students are now beginning to make links between cause and effect, seeing evidence as something to be questioned not simply accepted. This good achievement is continued into the upper school, where students are becoming adept at historical debate and where they can analyse source material with skill and confidence. Again, because the teaching is designed to bring success for all, students with special educational needs achieve well too, and make good progress.

155. Although GCSE results in 2001 were well below average for students attaining the higher grades, the new scheme of work and better teaching have meant that results have almost doubled in two years. No student entered for the examination failed to attain a grade and there is an increasing number of students operating just outside the higher-grade boundaries.

156. This improvement in examination performance is reflected in the standards observed during lessons. In Year 7, for example, students can make links between science and the spread of the Black Death. In Year 8, higher attaining students look for links between similar statements, in relation to the causes of the French Revolution for example, and are beginning to see the past in shades of grey, not purely black and white. By the end of Year 9 students are expected to compare what the German army had learned from the failure of the Schlieffen Plan with what the French government had not appreciated when preparing for invasion before the Second World War. Although students who find the work difficult cannot interpret sources to the same degree, high-attaining youngsters use historical words quite naturally when they are analysing the causes of the Great War. In answer to challenging questions from teachers, students in Year 10 can discuss the reasons for the Night of the Long Knives with real confidence and they can say how contemporary source material made Germans believe that Hitler was a man to be admired. Students in Year 11 build upon what they have learned and can decide upon the usefulness of source material to historians and make accurate comments on the reliability of source material in relation to the development of medical science in the nineteenth century.

157. The high quality of teaching is a major strength of the department and is characterised by comprehensive planning, very secure classroom management and an accurate assessment of the potential of all students. This has a positive impact on learning. Because teachers offer their students materials, in every lesson, which are aimed at three levels of attainment, they ensure that everyone has an opportunity to aim for the highest standards. A key feature is that teachers prepare their students well for more advanced study by placing great emphasis in the first three years on what is needed higher up the school. During the inspection, teaching was never less than good and in nearly half the lessons observed it was very good.

158. Because teachers spend considerable time gauging what their students can do, they are well aware of the potential of all their students. They work hard to provide their students with assignments, which are enjoyable, challenging, relevant to the learning needs of each individual and, therefore, designed to ensure progress. Furthermore, teachers mark work in depth and are not only concerned to celebrate the successes of their students, they are also keen to offer advice on how best their charges can improve their standards. In a very good Year 10 lesson, for example, students were encouraged to make comments on the quality of a short essay on Nazi Germany and were asked how it could be improved. This resulted in high standards of historical debate and, by the end of the lesson, students were well aware what they needed to do in order to attain the highest grade in the GCSE examination. In addition, because teachers place an appropriate emphasis on literacy, students aim for accuracy in spelling and in the use of historical terms.

159. Teachers are relentless in their questioning yet provide the utmost support to students in their search for the truth. Students know the level and grade at which they are working and respond very well to the high expectations their teachers have of them. Many students attempt assignments which demand a greater depth of thought and knowledge, but they do so because they have the utmost confidence in their teachers. Teachers recognise that their students learn in different ways and they place great emphasis on paired work and group discussion. Moreover, they treat their students with dignity and insist that they listen to and value the contributions of others. Cooperative work is, therefore, a major part of every lesson and students benefit from the challenge, the support and the praise of their colleagues. Very good behaviour, a willingness to work hard and a delight in the successes of their classmates were vital aspects of a very good Year 11 lesson on the development of anaesthetics, for example.

160. The department is well led and is a good example of how cooperation and the sharing of ideas can lead directly to improving standards. Staffing is very good and both teachers are talented and well qualified; they evaluate their work thoroughly and include the lessons gained in their very comprehensive planning. Accommodation is good and comprises two rooms very close to each other. Teachers are now looking at ways of extending the display in the larger of the two classrooms. Resources for learning are adequate and are augmented by the skill and industry of the staff who work long and hard to produce thought-provoking resources designed to meet their students' needs. For a small school, there is a good number of textbooks and biographies in the library, but ICT provision is, as yet, underdeveloped.

161. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards in both key stages are much improved, there is now very good teaching in history and assignments in lessons have been extended to three levels. Teachers care deeply for the welfare of their students and know exactly what is needed to ensure continued progress. The department is, therefore, well placed for future development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The quality of provision in information and communication technology is very good in the specialist lessons taught.

Strengths:

- Good teaching;
- Thorough and accurate assessment in ICT lessons;
- Levels of resource and technical support.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards of attainment in the subject;
- The use of ongoing assessment through the school;
- Poor deployment of resources;
- Focussed and co-ordinated use of ICT in other subjects.

162. The students' levels of attainment overall in this subject are well below national standards.

163. In 2001, no students at the end of Year 9 reached the national target of Level 5, although most achieved Level 4, while only eleven per cent of those entered for GCSE attained at least Grade C. The national figure was five times greater.

164. Overall, the current students' level of attainment was below national standards in two thirds of lessons observed, and in the work in most folders and files. For instance, very few of the students use both hands for word processing and none can type without any mistakes of spelling, punctuation and grammar. It is very common to find inappropriate use of fonts (type faces), of styles (such as **bold**, underlined and CAPITALS), and of special effects (like multi-coloured swirling titles). Again, while almost all are entirely fluent with using the network, windows, the mouse and menus, most Year 8 students and many in Year 10 are not skilled in cutting and pasting; very few even in Year 11 can work with Word's automatic spelling/grammar checker; and just as few coming up to GCSE can write, edit and lay out a text document to meet the needs of a given audience. When using spreadsheets – and not many in any year know what spreadsheet software is actually for – while most students in

Years 8 and 9 can set up and lay out a table, none can deal at more than a very simple level with formulas and chart drawing. Few students in Years 10 and 11 can do much better. Much the same applies to their design of database files and PowerPoint presentations. This represents unsatisfactory achievement by the end of Year 11.

165. Most students in Year 7 are extremely enthusiastic and very few even in Year 11 find the subject boring or irrelevant. Thus attendance and punctuality to ICT lessons are generally good, most work set is done when and how it should be, and it is rare to find a student who isn't proud of what's produced.

166. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory; in fact, in Years 7, 8 and 9 it is always good and mostly very good, while in Years 10 and 11 it is mostly good. The main strengths of the ICT teaching throughout the main school are great pace, a good variety of activities and resources, and clear focus on National Curriculum expectations and levels. All these ensure rapid learning. The main area still to be developed is setting lesson targets and quick assessment tasks that are specific and detailed and meet the needs of the learners' backgrounds and abilities. Both of these would improve learning by providing greater motivation to students,

167. There are two causes for poor attainment in this subject area. First, it is only recently that every single student in Years 7 to 11 has an ICT lesson every week where s/he can develop skills and concepts on an individual computer. Because of this, the school now meets the demands of the National Curriculum in ICT, by being sure that every student receives what s/he is entitled to receive. Second, very few students in any of those five year groups have the opportunity to practise, develop and extend the ideas met in lessons - through work in the other subjects and/or through carefully guided tasks on the school's computers outside of lesson time or at home.

168. The teacher in charge of this subject has been working here on all these aspects of ICT education for a short time only and has made remarkable progress. As well as giving all students in all these year groups a weekly ICT lesson - with those in Years 10 and 11 on the road to a "short" GCSE in the subject - from the end of Year 9 a full GCSE course is among the choices on offer. The schemes of work to support all these courses, and the learning resources to support the schemes, are in an advanced stage of development; there are plenty of high quality computers on the school's well managed network to allow enough access by whole classes, small groups and individual students.

169. Using specific ICT lessons alone, it is, however, very unusual for a school to meet Castle Community's ambitious targets for attainment levels by the end of Year 9 and for good grades in short and full GCSE exams at the end of Year 11. The school would benefit now from re-considering teaching and management staff roles to allow the appropriate and effective planning, development, carrying out, coordination and evaluation of the use of ICT in every subject of the timetable. Indeed, the school is already thinking about this and has the capacity to see such a programme through. Doing so would have the added advantage of ensuring that all the students in every subject area also meet ICT in practice as the National Curriculum expects. To support all this, it is likely to be necessary to ensure that every student has appropriate access to a computer outside of lesson time, to carry out guided practice and extension tasks.

170. There has already been remarkable progress in ICT since the last inspection in 2000. The school is now moving quickly and effectively towards meeting national standards as regards the students' skills with, knowledge of, and understanding of computers and their use in the "real world".

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths:

- The department has made substantial improvement since the last inspection;
- Teaching is good; lessons are well planned;
- Very good relationships promote positive attitudes to learning.

Areas for improvement:

- Teachers should provide more challenging work, especially for higher-attaining students;
- The department should develop strategies to improve skills and confidence in speaking;
- Teachers should make continuous use of assessment information when planning for learning;
- The department should make regular, planned use of ICT to support learning in languages.

171. The school's performance in modern languages has improved very considerably since the last inspection, and continues to improve on a number of fronts. The proportion of students attaining grades A* to C in the GCSE examination in French has more than tripled over the past three years, and although well below the national average, is now higher than in similar schools. The proportion of students attaining a GCSE grade A* to G in French is in line with the average for all schools nationally. The performance of girls and boys in public examinations is identical; consequently boys attain results nearer to the national average for boys than girls compared with girls in the rest of the country. Spanish results are not as high, but are expected to improve markedly in the coming year.

172. In the work seen during the inspection, students at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are attaining standards below the national average, and in speaking the attainment of most students is well below average. Many students of all ages lack confidence to use the language they have learned, although there are exceptions in classes where the teacher makes more constant use of the language taught and give the students opportunities to use it also.

173. Students of average and lower levels of prior attainment, and those with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory progress throughout. In the lower school they are able to sustain with support the same range of language activities as the higher attainers. Classroom assistants play a key role in the progress which these pupils make: they join in with the lesson as learners and share the learning experience with the students they support. Older students of average or below-average attainment continue to make good progress; a group of lower attainers were seen in Year 11 practising ways of expressing their plans for the future and using a range of different expressions based on the model provided by the teacher, whereas in a parallel class of higher attainers no attempt was made by the teacher to insist on more extended and open-ended responses. Higher-attaining students do not always make satisfactory progress because teachers' expectations of them are often not high enough. Although the work is often matched to attainment with extension activities for more capable students to complete, teachers are too easily satisfied with minimal answers in both writing and speaking activities rather than expecting more extended responses which enable students to rehearse and consolidate language structures.

174. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Modern languages are taught by a group of highly-experienced staff, all of whom have good personal language skills. A majority of the lessons seen during the inspection were good, with no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Lessons are well planned, with a range of activities to match the different levels of attainment in the class. Students know from the outset what they will learn. Homework is well planned also, and contains a core activity for all, an extension activity for the higher attainers and an optional activity for students who wish to do more. However, teachers' expectations – especially the most capable students – are often not high enough, and achievement, especially in speaking, could be higher. When a language structure is being practised in the lesson the teacher often stops short of giving all students the opportunity to practise it, and in many cases is satisfied with a single-word response. Speaking skills are often rehearsed as a pair or groupwork activity where the teacher has less control or opportunity to correct and refine language, and students sometimes reinforce mistakes and misconceptions. Too often the teacher passes too quickly from language rehearsal to less demanding activities such as language recognition through listening or matching phrases to pictures. Some teachers do not use the target language sufficiently in lessons.

175. The school provides rich opportunities through the curriculum for students to learn languages. All students study French throughout, and the higher attainers study Spanish up to the end of Year 9, with the option to continue their study of the language to GCSE level. The modern languages curriculum is enhanced through a number of extra-curricular activities and learning opportunities, and the department organises a successful annual activity holiday in France.

176. There is a scheme of work based upon the national programmes of study for modern languages. Although the content of the scheme of work has to an extent been customised to suit the needs of the students in the school it would be more helpful if it provided specific examples of how topics should be taught and where assessment and other teaching and learning opportunities occur, thus pooling the expertise of the teachers in the department. The modern languages department does not make sufficient planned use of computers to support learning, and does not conform to the requirements of the National Curriculum in this respect.

177. Modern languages learning contributes well to students' personal development. Relationships are very good, both between teachers and students and amongst the students themselves. Teachers have a smiling, supportive manner which encourages good behaviour and has a positive impact on learning. Lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of friendship and trust. Teachers take opportunities to explain cultural similarities and differences which arise from the work, and make a strong contribution to students' literacy development through their explanations of linguistic features. The language understanding of a Year 8 class was extended when the teacher gave examples of how an accented 'e' in French often signifies a missing 's'. The head of department makes careful analyses of examination performance to aid future planning and target-setting, but there should be a regular and more detailed analysis of students' day-to-day progress to inform teaching and learning strategies.

178. The leadership of the modern languages department ensures that teachers discuss and share their expertise with one another, both at the regular meetings where teaching and learning always feature high on the agenda and through observing one another's lessons. The head of department has not, however, as yet monitored the quality of teaching provision across the whole department, and this needs to become part of established and regular practice alongside the lesson observations which already take place. From these activities the department needs to establish a consensus on expectations of students, the use of the target language in lessons and the organisation of effective oral work.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is good.

Strengths:

- Good quality teaching.
- Students' positive attitude to the subject
- The very good improvement since the previous inspection
- The very good management of the subject.
- The provision for extra curricular activities.

Areas for improvement:

- To raise attainment at both key stages.
- Revise the schemes to include a greater emphasis on developing creative skills and music from other cultures.
- End of topic assessment to accurately inform pupils of the levels achieved.
- Improve ICT resources to sustain more sophisticated programs to extend higher attaining pupils.
- Improve audio equipment to record pupils' performance and creative work.

179. No students were entered for the 2001 GCSE examination. Teacher assessments of Year 9 students showed that attainment was above the national average. These results are inflated and are not the findings of the inspection. In lessons and work seen the overall judgement is that by the end of Year 9, students do not reach the expected level. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are better, these students having had the benefit of regular specialist teaching since the beginning of their secondary education.

180. Students' previous musical experiences are limited, entering the school with a low level of knowledge having had few opportunities to compose music and develop creative skills. However students do have sound rhythmic qualities and these skills are further developed with the emphasis on performance in the early years. This was most evident in a Year 8 practical lesson. Here, during a class performance playing recorders and tuned percussion instruments, students successfully played a rhythmically correct melody whilst maintaining a steady beat with an ensemble awareness. Students have sound knowledge of the instruments of the orchestra, accurately identifying and placing them into the appropriate families and correctly explaining how the sounds are produced. In a keyboard topic in Year 9 students' performance skills and theoretical knowledge are further developed. They accurately name the notes on the keyboard and can play simple melodies that are rhythmically correct reading from formal notation. Students' composition skills are not as good as they should be, due mainly to the lack of emphasis in the schemes of work on students' creative development. Although students are beginning to write short melodies these are of a basic level with limited understanding of the structure of a composition and knowledge of primary chords to help develop their melodies. Listening skills are under developed and their understanding of a range of different styles of music is limited, in particular music from other cultures. Students' singing in class is tuneful, maintaining pitch and rhythm.

181. The overall attainment of students in Year 10 is below the level expected at this point in the course. There are no music groups in Year 11. A contributory reason for this below average attainment is due to the fact that pupils did not have the benefit of regular lessons during Years 7 to 9, failing to reach the expected level of 14-years-old. However, students are making satisfactory progress and are beginning to develop an understanding of historical developments. They are able to discuss with understanding the early periods of music, for

example the Baroque style, and name composers who contributed to the period. They have an understanding of the musical elements and use the appropriate vocabulary when appraising music and discussing their work. The composing element of the course is under developed. Although students have an understanding of a 'ground bass' (a technique used as a basis for a composition) few pupils have added a melody or have the understanding of a structure of a composition to develop their work. Only two of the students in the group have established performance ability, however others are developing their skills and are making satisfactory progress.

182. Students use simple information communication technology music programs to support their learning. These are proving to be effective, in particular establishing basic skills, however the hardware is insufficient to support more sophisticated programs to help higher attaining pupils with composition development. Students who play a musical instrument achieve well. Students with special educational needs are fully included in lessons and make satisfactory progress, achieving appropriate set targets.

183. The overall quality of teaching is good, one lesson very good. Teaching has many good qualities but a particular strength is the very good relationships that teachers have with pupils, creating an ethos where students are confident to seek help when required, contributing well to their learning. In all lessons good teacher subject knowledge is used effectively through lively explanations, clear demonstrations and drawing on personal examples to illustrate a particular point. The response from students to this approach is positive, resulting in students settling quickly to work with a clear understanding of the task leading to effective learning. Learning is accelerated in all lessons by the skilful management of students, insisting on quiet when explaining or demonstrating a procedure, leading to good progress and learning. Learning is better when the lessons start with a clear recap on previous work, skilful questioning to challenge students together with a worksheet to help students to focus on a particular skill. This was most noticeable in the listening section of a Year 10 lesson. Here students responded well, showing a high level of interest and developing a clear understanding how the same piece of music can be performed in different styles. Teaching and learning are less effective when 'teacher talk' is too long and planning does not include a practical activity, resulting in students becoming restless and passive.

184. Short-term assessment of students' progress is well established during lessons with good circulation by the teacher keeping students on track, encouraging them and guiding to the next phase of learning, in particular higher attaining students. End of topic assessment however is not established and students are unaware of the level they have achieved. The lack of audio recordings of students' performance and creative work is an omission in the assessment procedures, partially due to the inadequate recording equipment.

185. The improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. This improvement is due to the appointment of a head of department. The management of the subject is now very good and, in the short time the head of department has had responsibility for the subject, has successfully raised the profile to a point where all students now regard it as a worthwhile subject. The extra curricular provision is good. The activities are well supported and provide challenging opportunities for high attaining and gifted students.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- The GCSE results in 2001 were almost in line with the national average and better than all other subjects in the school.
- Teaching is good and meets students' assessed needs.
- Students' achievement is good.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.
- Students' attitudes are very good and they have very good relationships with their teachers.
- Standards attained in extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement:

- Raise the attainment of students in Years 9 and 11 by providing more opportunities for student evaluation.
- Schemes of work in relation to the four National Curriculum content areas, risk assessment, ICT, literacy and numeracy.
- Analyse results and assessment data to improve curriculum planning.

186. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, 15 per cent of students attained A*-C grades. In 2001, students' results were much improved with 47 per cent of students attaining A*-C grades which was just below the national average. Girls' and boys' results were very similar and the majority of students achieved well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school, which was below expectations. Students attained better in physical education than they did in their other subjects. These improved results were partly attributable to the introduction of more specific target setting and the grouping of students by ability within their lessons. Examinations will be taken at GCSE Level in dance in 2002. There are 12 girls and 2 boys on the course. Teacher assessments indicate that at least half the students will attain results in the A*-C range. Dance is now included in the curriculum for Years 7, 8 and 9 and each student will experience one lesson of dance each half year. In preparation and to forge co-operate links the dance teacher goes into feeder primary schools to teach dance to Year 6 students.

187. In all lessons observed, students of all abilities, in all years, made good progress. Their achievement is good overall and illustrates well the department's commitment to the inclusion of all students. Students' ball skills are below average on entry to the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 9 their attainment in all activities is in line with national expectations. Boys and girls in Year 7 have average catching and passing skills in basketball but their footwork is very insecure. Students in dance are able to link basic movements together to form simple sequences. The majority of students in Year 9 have acquired good basic skills in volleyball. Lower attaining students find it difficult to consistently link these skills. When trampolining, students have above average skills and higher attaining students are able to perform advanced rotational movements with confidence. However, a few students in both trampolining and gymnastics have little body tension and control. Students' analytical and evaluative skills are not well developed and there is a lack of guidance in promoting this strand of the National Curriculum in the units of work in Years 7 to 9.

188. The standard of work observed in GCSE classes during the inspection was in line with the national average. The majority of students attain well in the practical aspects of the course. Their knowledge and use of technical language is limited, for example when describing the circulatory system. Although written work is mostly well presented and most students are using ICT to process their training programmes, the low literacy skills of a few students hinder their overall attainment.

189. Students in Years 10 and 11 in the non-examination classes attain standards in line with standards expected nationally. When playing rugby the majority of students work energetically and have a good understanding of the basic rules. Two boys play for local teams and were able to lead the fitness activities with a very good knowledge of health and safety. Boys and girls play badminton with skills that are at the appropriate level but students' attainment is limited in this activity by lack of specialist facilities. The only indoor areas for games are the gymnasium and school canteen. Both facilities are unsuitable because they limit depth of shot, speed of play and the amount of court time experienced by students. The work of students observed during dance club showed high attainment levels and a good balance between technical accuracy and expressive dancing.

190. A few individual students and teams achieve high standards in district and county competitions in athletics, rugby, trampolining, dance and tug of war. The attainment of these talented students is well above the national average and they benefit considerably from the opportunities offered by their teachers. The numbers of students who attend extra-curricular activities and the increased numbers taking the examinations demonstrate the positive involvement of students in the subject.

191. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good and this promoted good learning in the majority of lessons. All teaching is satisfactory, four fifths is good including almost a third which is very good. In the best lessons, students benefit in their learning because a wide variety of challenging tasks are set and very good relationships have been established with students. Teachers make every effort to ensure the progress of all abilities of students: they divide groups into lower, middle and higher attainers, they use a variety of equipment and they match tasks to students' ability. This very good planning for learning ensures that demanding yet achievable targets challenge all students, boys and girls, in all classes. Teachers recap previous work and share the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson with the students. This is a particularly successful strategy with the lower attaining students who often need to refine and revisit existing skills before progress can be made. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and their demonstrations give students a clear visual image of the activity and show them how to improve their skills. The dance teacher has very good subject expertise and her choreography skills show energy and imagination. Her teaching has high expectations and pace.

192. The department focuses on developing literacy skills in their indoor lessons when key words and objectives are written up in the gym but strategies for the development of numeracy and ICT are not yet regularly used. There are no computers in the department but staff are presently receiving appropriate training. Opportunities are not frequently provided to encourage students to look at and evaluate their own and the work of others. In a few lessons students are not given sufficient independent learning tasks, for example to enable and encourage them to take responsibility for warming up and stretching out. The very short activity time provided by the 50 minute lesson does limit the variety of teaching strategies but the use of both lessons in the week for the same activity encourages continuity in learning.

193. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a good varied programme of activities. The new head of department provides good leadership for a developing department. She leads by very good example with her teaching and supports the other member of staff well. The department has not yet analysed examination results sufficiently but the assessment procedures are very comprehensive. Students are well informed about their levels and future targets and these strategies have helped to raise the attainment of students in all years.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- High quality teaching;
- Lessons are planned very well and taught with vigour and enthusiasm;
- The subject is managed very well;
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of students;
- There is imaginative and highly skilled use of ICT in lessons.

Areas for improvement:

- Time allocation for the subject is too low;
- Higher attaining students do not develop their writing in sufficient depth;
- Development of opportunities to visit local religious sites;
- The provision for public examination courses in the subject.

194. There are, at present, no examination entries in this subject. In lessons seen and in work analysed during the inspection, most students make good progress in religious education, despite the fact that many enter the school with very low standards of literacy and subject knowledge. During their first year at the school, students develop a clear knowledge and understanding of Christianity and, as time goes by, of other major world religions. As a result of these advances in subject skills, students also develop confidence in discussing religious and moral issues, and their oral progress is good. This was seen, for example, in a Year 8 lesson on the Holocaust, during which the teacher used ICT very effectively to conduct a “virtual tour” of concentration camps. Students expressed their feelings about the images shown in a very mature and thoughtful manner. Written work, however, presents difficulties for many students, and, as a result, standards are below those expected by the Agreed Syllabus by the end of Year 9.

195. During Years 10 and 11, many students develop the capacity to examine moral issues in more depth, such as conflict and reconciliation, and moral issues in medicine. In this respect, some good extended writing was seen from Year 11 students on moral issues surrounding the notion of eugenics. In the sixth form, spiritual and moral issues are examined in the general studies course. Throughout the curriculum, statutory requirements are met but the time allocation for the subject is low. This has a negative effect on the development of some subject skills, particularly in terms of a deeper knowledge and understanding of spiritual and moral issues. Overall achievement by the end of Year 11 is good, although standards of attainment are still below those expected by the Agreed Syllabus.

196. The quality of teaching is very good. The specialist head of department has very good subject knowledge and uses this very well to promote students’ learning. Lessons are planned with commendable attention to detail so that students know precisely what they are

expected to do. Care is taken to ensure that all students are included in the learning process through well-targeted questioning and written tasks are adapted well to suit the needs of students with differing levels of ability. A wide variety of techniques is used to support student learning, including video, ICT, class discussion and short written tasks; for example, in a Year 7 lesson during which students examined the importance and reliability of evidence through music and video extracts on the Roswell incident. Above all, there is an air of enjoyment, enthusiasm and purpose in lessons and this encourages students to become active participants in classroom activities. Relationships are very strong and all students show very positive attitudes towards the subject. They show respect for each other and for differing viewpoints. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 10 lesson during which students showed maturity and insight in discussing the origins and sources of conflict in human life. Higher attaining students show maturity in their oral and written work but need more opportunities to develop subject skills in depth. Lower attaining students, and those with special educational needs, are supported well in class but their progress is hampered by low levels of literacy. The department is making strenuous efforts to overcome these obstacles by the implementation of clear policies on literacy development.

197. The department is managed very well. Assessment procedures are used effectively to monitor individual progress and very thorough marking gives students a clear idea on how to improve their work. The subject makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of students, particularly in the area of multifaith education and combating racism. There is a commendable and imaginative use of ICT in the subject, especially in terms of using this to develop students' understanding of world religions; for example, in the use of interactive websites on Islam in Year 8. Students would, however, benefit from opportunities to visit local religious sites.

198. Overall, religious education is a strength in the school, particularly in terms of the high quality of teaching and the very positive attitudes of the students towards the subject. The key challenge now is to build upon these strengths and to develop public examination courses within the subject.

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

199. In the inspection, three 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 [latest year for which national comparisons are available].

[Notes: text above is common to all inspections;
 enter subjects in the table in the order in table 4 of *Inspecting School Sixth Forms*;
 give percentages to the nearest whole number;
 give average point scores to one decimal place;
 expand or contract tables to match the number of subjects.]

GCE AS Level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Information Technology	9	100		22		4.0	
General Studies	7	30		0		0.2	
Health and Social Care	1	100		0		1.0	

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
Business Studies	2	100		0		8.0	
Health and Social Care	3	100		33		12.0	

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Health and Social Care	7	100		43		28	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Science

200. Work in science was sampled. AVCE science has been offered since September 2000. Prior to that two students studied AS biology during 1999/2000 and both passed, and 8 students followed advanced GNVQ science and all but one student completed the qualification, including two distinctions and one merit. Seven students started a 3-unit AVCE course in September 2000. Only three completed the first year and only one passed both compulsory tests. All three students are continuing with the subject this year.

201. A one-to-one tutorial was observed and teaching was good, with a clear focus on what the student needed to do to improve his grade. One student's portfolio was scrutinised and work completed is generally of grade E standard. For example, experiments on fluid flow are described and results recorded but these are not linked to the underlying physics and there is no evidence of numerical work such as using fluid flow equations. Marking is constructive with helpful comments although assessment of standards attained is over-generous. On the basis of test results and the work seen, standards are well below the national average. There is a departmental folder for this course which includes the requirements of the awarding body with appropriate tasks to address these. Apart from this, there is little mention of Post 16 science in departmental documentation. Since September 2001, Post 16 science courses have not been offered to students entering the Sixth Form.

BUSINESS STUDIES

The focus of the inspection was on business studies courses at intermediate and advanced levels.

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

Strengths:

- teachers' subject knowledge and understanding;
- good teaching and learning, with high expectations;
- effective links with the local business community;
- standards are rising.

Areas for improvement:

- low results in 2001;
- insufficient use of specific learning objectives linked to the needs of individuals and groups of students during lessons.

202. The business studies results have been well below average in 2000 and 2001 with only about one third of students passing the intermediate or advanced vocational qualifications. However, few of these students had any qualifications in business before they started their courses in Year 12. The teaching has improved and is now more careful and systematic, with a sharp focus on developing students' understanding of key concepts, skills and understanding. Consequently, students' learning has improved and standards are rising, although they are still below average. For example, most Year 12 students have a satisfactory understanding of the nature and processes of marketing management, and can

discuss economies of scale, segmentation and the positioning of advertising. Fewer are able to apply these concepts to new business situations. Few students have yet developed good study skills or fluency with the application of number, but most are making good progress in their grasp of current affairs and general business knowledge. Students' written work is competent and thorough but often spoilt by weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

203. Good quality teaching enables students to learn well and make rapid progress, as they overcome the limitation of little or no previous contact with business studies. The teaching is provided mainly by school staff but there is a significant contribution by a tutor from South Kent College. The main strengths of the teaching are the teachers' good levels of knowledge and understanding of business education, the brisk pace of learning as teachers use time efficiently, and the effective use of a wide range of learning resources, although immediate access to a laptop and data projector would allow the use of even better resources. A weakness in teaching is that there is as yet little use in lessons of specific, assessable learning objectives linked to the needs of individuals and groups in the class.

204. The good quality teaching leads to good quality learning, and students' work shows rapid and thoughtful development of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding. In one lesson, students learned quickly about market segmentation and how to use it to devise effective market research. There was very good learning about marketing in the real world from the marketing director of a multinational engineering firm at a conference for local schools and colleges, although attendance at this was relatively low. There are good links with local businesses that provide students with work experience and other learning opportunities. For example, students are involved in a marketing project with a local organisation and this will form the basis of one of their assignments.

205. The previous inspection team, in 2000, reported that there is good learning in some business studies lessons. Now there is good learning in all business studies lessons. Also, the curriculum has been improved, the quality of teaching is better and standards are rising steadily.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The focus of the inspection was on the work of the group of Year 12 studying ASVCE ICT and the work of all students who study ICT as part of the key skills programme

Overall, the quality of provision for ICT is **good**.

Strengths:

- effective and committed teaching;
- students' use of ICT key skills as part of their other work;
- good AS ICT results in 2001.

Areas for improvement:

- links between the management and teaching of ICT in the main school and Sixth Form;
- use of different learning objectives for students' differing levels of attainment;
- the assessment of individual students' progress on a weekly basis is not yet secure.

206. Last summer, all nine students entered for AS Level ICT passed, and the results were above the national average for all comprehensives. This year's Year 12 students are working towards the vocational equivalent qualification – ASVCE. Their levels of attainment are close to national standards and they are making good progress, often achieving well compared to their GCSE results.

207. The school also expects all the students to develop their ICT skills to Levels 2 or 3 as a key skills qualification. This is done within their main courses, as part of general studies, and by specific weekly ICT lessons. In 2001, all students achieved Level 2 in ICT key skills and five students achieved Level 3, which represents good achievement. When word processing, for instance, almost all students type with both hands, can appropriately mix in pictures from a range of sources, can adapt their work to meet the needs of different audiences, and know how to use several options in most Microsoft Word menus. Those studying the ASVCE course are generally rather more fluent keyboard users now.

208. With spreadsheet software, all students can set up and manipulate a neat and attractive table and then enter different types of data items into the cells. Most can work with a few simple formulas, and many can produce simple charts from tables. The ASVCE students are confident with complex spreadsheet tasks and some record simple macros and import spreadsheet tables into a text document. These students are developing a good understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of using different software packages in commercial environments.

209. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In one lesson, for example, the learning objectives were clearly expressed, although in an ICT key skills lesson the learning objectives were not precise enough to be helpful to the students. The teachers' good subject knowledge results in clear demonstrations which use students' ideas well, for example, teaching about macros. During lessons, students' progress is carefully monitored and they are helped to overcome any difficulties they face. The learning resources provided for students are clear and comprehensive. In one lesson, some students completed the tasks that had been set and did not then know what to do next.

210. The schemes of work are appropriately and carefully designed, and the assessment of what the students have done by the end of each unit of their courses is accurate and helpful. Assessment in the shorter term is less thorough, however, with many little slips of spelling, punctuation and grammar not being corrected as well as quite large gaps in the content. Also, the development of the concept of specific learning objectives for each group of students in each lesson still needs some improvement. The assessment of individual students' progress on a weekly basis is not yet secure.

211. While there is sufficient contact between the Sixth Form ICT teacher and the head of the subject (based and working in the main school), it would benefit both – as well as all the school students and their learning – to move towards sharing the teaching and administrative load in both parts of the campus.

212. The 2000 inspection report did not comment on ICT in the Sixth Form. However, since then staffing and learning resources have improved greatly, and standards have risen. Students have ready access to computers in the Post 16 block and the main school's library.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus of the inspection was on the Intermediate GNVQ and the 12 unit Advanced courses in health and social care.

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **good**.

Strengths:

- Students' attitudes are very good.
- Good teaching enables students to achieve well in relation to their GCSE results.
- Good leadership.
- The support for learners provided by the learning support assistant is very good.
- Very good accommodation and resources.
- Discussion and written assessments provide supportive and developmental feedback to students.

Areas for improvement:

- More visits to care settings.
- More input by current care practitioners.
- Analyse results and assessment data to improve curriculum planning.

213. Overall, standards are average. In 2000, four students were registered for the Advanced GNVQ course. They attained a distinction, and three merits. In 2001, five students entered the examination. Three completed the units and gained one distinction, one merit and two passes respectively and two students only completed one unit. In 2000, the four students on the intermediate course attained a distinction, a merit and two passes. In 2001, eight students entered the intermediate course and attained three merits and four passes and one student did not complete the course. Results show that since 1999 the majority of students have completed their courses and their achievement in relation to their average point score at GCSE has been good and very good for a minority of students.

214. The provision of the intermediate course in the Sixth Form helps those students who achieved foundation level in Year11 by providing continuity of study and giving students the opportunity to take an accredited course related to their choice of career. Courses are mostly taken up by girls but there has been a small number of boys in each year group and their achievement has been good and similar to that of girls. The majority of students on these courses pursue a career linked to care, with nursing, teaching, and child care being popular destinations of previous students. Present students report how much they value the courses because they provide an accreditation linked to their proposed careers in the care sector and in the case of the intermediate students a stepping stone to other courses, in child care, for example. They also appreciate the advice and career guidance given to them by the head of the department.

215. The attainment of the majority of students on both courses matches the pass standard, with a minority of students attaining above this level. AVCE students use health and social care terminology accurately. They understand the fundamental concepts of health and social care and manage their learning reasonably independently. Their portfolios show good organisation and are well presented. They use ICT well to interrogate and research material as well as to word process their assignments. Much evidence for their key skills accreditation is taken from health and social care assignments. Intermediate students report they found the independent style of working very testing at first but are now more comfortable with the process. They work well in pairs and small groups and most are confident to give feedback informally to the main group. They are confident using ICT and their portfolios show

good use of presentation and graphical skills. Lower attainers transcribe material from text without fully understanding the contents and a few students are still too reliant on their teachers. Students bring insufficient ideas from outside the classroom and do not draw sufficiently on their experience of care settings during class discussion and question and answer sessions. However, they use real case studies of friends and relatives when researching health and well being units.

216. Teaching is good overall. The head of department has a very good knowledge of course requirements and guides students' learning within a focused framework. Students learn well because they feel secure and understand the evidence base needed to attain specific grades. Students' attitudes are very good. They are keen to express their ideas but also ready to listen and consider the views of others. Teachers share lesson objectives at the start of each lesson and use a style of questioning which encourages discussion and challenges and extends students' thinking. Lessons have a variety of learning activities which motivate and interest students, for example, students are frequently given the opportunity to carry out independent research. This develops their reasoning and enquiry skills. Teachers circulate well, working with small groups of students and encouraging worthwhile discussion to promote understanding. Teaching and learning is insufficiently based on primary evidence. Visits to health care settings and visits from practitioners are not arranged frequently or early enough in the courses. Thus teaching does not draw sufficiently on students' outside experiences. However, teachers are happy to share evidence from their own lives to illustrate a variety of topics and this leads to the very good relationships observed in the department.

217. The support given by the learning support assistant to the students with special educational needs and to other students is very good. The group also benefits from the experience and high standards of a mature student who has returned to study as a route to working with disabled children.

218. Assessment is regular and informative. Teachers review and evaluate assignments giving students areas for improvement and time schedules both in writing and in an individual interview. The planning of assignments is excellent. Students know exactly what they need to do to achieve specific grades and interim assessments by their teacher then build on this. Students really appreciate the help and guidance provided by this system.

219. Leadership and management are good and the head of department has a clear educational vision for the development of accredited care courses. The three members of the department meet regularly to plan teaching and learning but the head of department carries the sole responsibility, as the only specialist, for monitoring and moderating all assignments. The very good accommodation and resources are much appreciated by the students. The courses provide very good opportunities for students' personal, social, moral and cultural development through the many ethical and social aspects of the syllabus. The department documentation is not well organised. There is no clear evidence of records and analysis of examination results. However, moderators' comments are positive and the department reviews teaching and learning annually based on these reports. The department has moved forwards since the previous inspection and met the new challenges of the evolving health and social care curriculum successfully.

220. Health and social care is offered at AVCE in three units, six units and twelve units in Years 12 and 13 and at Intermediate GNVQ Level in Year 12. This provides a broad range of appropriate provision in the subject.